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The Mask of Beauty

By Fanny Lewald.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

Mary M. Pleasants.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. A. CARTER.

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THE MASK OF BEAUTY.

A Novel.

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BY

MARY M. PLEASANTS.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. A. CARTER.

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THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED

TO

MRS. JAMES D. CRUMP,

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA,

MY CLASS-MATE AT SCHOOL, MY FELLOW-SUFFERER IN TOIL,

MY COMPANION IN TRIUMPH AND MY FRIEND

IN TIME AND ETERNITY.

MARY M. PLEASANTS.

THE MASK OF BEAUTY.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

AMONG those localities whose shores are washed by the Baltic Sea is Hela, a peninsula, which stretches out north and almost parallel with the mainland, and encloses the bay of Putzig Wieck. This promontory is only six miles long, a quarter of a mile broad at its best, and, in some places, so narrow that the water occasionally covers it. From the beech-crowned heights opposite, the sands are dazzlingly white, as, like a slightly bent bow, its outlines rise out of the surrounding waters.

On its extreme point is situated the fishing town of Hela, whose lighthouse gleam is distinguishable far over the waves. As the peninsula has only been transformed from an island by the gradual accumulation of sand at its southern extremity, it retains all the characteristics of its original form.

The nature of the soil is such as to render communication by land very difficult, and the inhabitants, almost exclusively, travel by water. The effect of this isolation is apparent in the character and customs of the people. In Hela, as on the mainland, the population consists of a mixture of the original Poles, and the Germans who, during the civil war, came into the country. In both places the religious distinctions coincide exactly with those of race, so that one knows a German to be Protestant, a Pole, Roman Catholic. At the present time the island (as the people call their home) has a population of twelve hundred, divided between three small villages and the town of Hela. The villages of Ceynowo, Putzig and Heisternest are inhabited by the Roman Catholics, while Dantzig and Hela hold the Protestant element of the island. Hela is six miles distant from Putzig, the nearest town on the mainland.

Although, at some seasons, the peninsula can be easily reached by boat, few strangers ever touch its shores. Even at this late day, there are no bathing resorts in Hela, as in other parts of Prussia's coast, and so it possesses that seclusion which causes one to speak of it as a remote district.

Occupations and trades which, usually, bring about communication among the people, are very few and simple on the island. The older men are engaged in fishing, and most of the young ones go to sea for a term of years. The women take charge of the arduous cultivation of the small garden plots and work up the wool of the native sheep. Here, more than elsewhere, life moves with quiet monotony.

There is no difference between modes of occupation in town and village, but the neat houses which line the street of the former contrast strongly with the miserable huts of the latter. And the Helans are very proud of their town. They boast of their church, founded in the twelfth century—according to the assertion of an inscription on the steeple—of the beautiful white lighthouse (in their dialect called *Bise*), which raises its stately head from the southern point of the peninsula, and of their great wooden bell-tower which once a year sends forth summons to the citizens to pay taxes to the Dantzig *Commissarius*.

Besides all these advantages the small town possesses a *Bürgermeister*, some lawyers and a council who, though fishermen like the rest, arrogate to themselves superiority in consideration of their titles.

While strangers never seek Hela except on business, the inhabitants show as little disposition to leave their home. This is most strikingly true of the women, and only now and then grim want drives Polish girls into service on the estates or in towns of the mainland.

In Hela all the women are natives, with rare exceptions, and since for generations the families have intermarried, there is a marked resemblance of face and figure among the inhabitants.

This likeness is intensified by the similarity of dress and manners. The only mode of making distinctions among the people is their way of conducting the fishing business. It is this: No one citizen is rich enough to own a large net in his own right, and, therefore, many take stock in the same one, and the rank of each is exactly proportioned to his interest. These consequential people are duly respected by the less fortunate, though the bond of relationship and citizenship to some extent lessens the distinction.

The villagers are exceedingly poor, and the townspeople not much better off. The owner of a few one-story houses, a small boat, a share in one of the great nets, and a capital of a few hundred dollars is considered an opulent person. It may be that the communistic custom of dividing the herring haul between the owners and workers, who comprise the male population, has brought about this comparative equality of possessions.

As both men and women do their own work, a paid laborer is seldom seen in the peninsula of Hela. But, when existing at all, the servants are from the Polish villages.

The costume of the men consists of large sailor trousers and jackets of blue cloth; that of the women of narrow skirts and tight-fitting jerkins of blue-and-white coarse linen. To the latter the Polish women add a large kerchief—a custom which was followed by all laboring women during the first quarter of the nineteenth century in West Prussia. The same sands which have for many years confined the Helans to their peninsula seem to have kept their mode of dress intact.

It is true that each summer the fishermen cross over to Dantzig from Hela to dispose of their stock, and the villagers visit Putzig for the same purpose, but with this their travel ends. No sooner does the autumn weather begin than the roads become impassable, boating dangerous, and all communication ceases.

Even the advantage of sleighing, so great in other cold countries, is denied to the inhabitants for the want of horses and vehicles. And so months often pass without bringing any arrival to or departure from Hela, nor an item of news save what may occur within its narrow limits.

This monotonous, uninteresting life in which men are, for lack of future, thrown back upon the past and present, seems to give the best explanation of the superstition that characterizes them. Stories that were probably simple in origin have, from numerous repetitions, gained much in material and mystery, and are accorded universal credence.

And just as caste pride is strongest in narrow circumstances and isolation so imagination is in these conditions most powerful.

Passing by the myths which are connected with the settlement of the peninsula and the founding of Hela which attribute their establishment to the Christian daughter of a Swedish king (who was thrown into the sea as punishment for her faith); passing by the stories of the Sunken City and of the Sea Spirit (whose power is noted in a funeral sermon as frightening the deceased to death), it is true that, until recently, the belief in witches and their arts was universal in Hela. As late as the year 1836 a woman, who had been proved a witch by the water-test, was put to death, and to this day there are traces of the superstition in the island.

The Protestant Germans accuse certain Polish women of possessing the Evil Eye, and they believe that others have the power of bewitching men and animals, and the Poles return the suspicion. In this day, although the influence of the clergy and schools has abolished the witch-test in Hela, many inhabitants retain a faith in it, which can only be eradicated by larger communication with the outer world.

One who visits this region now can hardly realize the condition of things thirty or forty years ago, when it was suffering from the curse of war. While Hela itself was not invaded, Dantzig, the market town, was beleaguered, highways destroyed and the country filled with hostile armies. For ten months the united Prussians and Russians seized the place and brought about bitter woe to the people. Grim want and afflictive diseases carried off thousands of victims in towns and in the country. Everywhere roamed bands of soldiers, intent upon preventing assistance to the French, who, under their gallant leader, General Rapp, had so long resisted the siege. Batteries were set up all along the coast to bombard approaching French vessels. All the inhabitants suffered from these soldiers, and considered themselves fortunate to retain roofs over their heads and enough food to sustain life, for, in spite of the best efforts of their commanders, there were committed many lawless, cruel acts, for which complaint was as useless as redress was impossible.

But what were all the trials—what were all the needs of the country people compared with those of the town? As time went on, single persons and families abandoned their whole possessions, and, by passes, came out of Dantzig, uncertain to what suffering they were fated, but thankful to escape after what they had experienced.

Late in the afternoon of November of this terrible year, a solitary woman was walking on the downs of the Peninsula of Hela. An hour since, she rested in a shop of Ceynowo, and now desired to reach Dantzig Heisternest before nightfall. It had been raining or snowing for a whole week previous, and to-day the sky was covered with gray, heavy clouds. Soon a sharp, northeast wind began to blow and parted the clouds far down on the western horizon, so that the pale, lusterless sun appeared. The sea was raging, and between the long-drawn howlings of the wind arose the thunder of the waves beating the shores.

The weather had rendered the sand firmer footing than in summer, but the half-melted snow made walking difficult and impeded the traveller's progress. She pressed on as well as she could against the wind gusts, and now and then glanced toward the sun, as if to calculate its possible duration. Once or twice she looked anxiously southward, where lay in close proximity the two villages of Heisternest, one of which, Dantzig, she must reach before the shades of night. She was a woman of handsome size, and wore, according to the custom of a *Bürgerfrau*, a mantle of black haircloth, a little the worse for wear, whose hood and edges were adorned with yellow-spotted fitchet fur. Over her head was thrown, as protection against the weather, a large, bright-colored kerchief, and the ends were fastened in her mantle.

On leaving Ceynowo, where she had failed to learn any news of her home, the traveller's step had been firm and vigorous, indicating a strong nature, but the farther she went on her fatiguing journey and the lower the sun fell in the sky, just so much slower became her movements and more evident her fatigue. At last she looked around anxiously for a resting-place. But the downs lack those natural resting-places which the country landscape usually affords. No rock nor stump invited the weary one to linger, and the heaps of sand, on which tawny sedges, a few miserable wild-oats and thistles bent before the wind, were too wet to sit upon. Meantime the sun had set, and the evening shadows began to spread. And worse still, the clouds again drew together and sent down a dry, light snow upon the earth.

The periodic, lengthy gusts of wind and the roaring waters completed the depressing circumstances. In vain the traveller listened for the baying of a dog or other sign of human habitation. Twice some cranes with rustling wings flew before her feet as they sought the grove of pine which covers a tract of the peninsula, and to her superstitious mind they betokened evil of some kind. Then a pair of sea-gulls, whose broad white wings resembled silvery flashes in the gloaming, shot over her head toward the sea.

No other sight or sound greeted the weary woman, as onward she walked. Finally darkness fell like a pall upon all nature, leaving no clew of place or time to the anxious, exhausted one. But suddenly a light struck her vision as a star of hope in the sky of despair. Wild joy filled her breast at the thought of reaching home—of securing rest. But to this first bliss of satisfied longing quickly ensued concern about how she should find her parents, for many years had passed since she left the village, and for a year or more she had neither seen nor heard of them. Alas! What might not have happened in that time? Such broodings made her uncomfortable. And even supposing she should find them well and hearty, it would be a sore trial to answer the questions necessary to explain her present return, for they would revive the painful past. But in spite of such unpleasant thoughts, there was an underlying feeling of gladness in the imminent deliverance from travelling and a good night of reviving sleep.

Yet as wildly as the wind howled and the sea groaned, their disturbances seemed small in comparison with the terrors of the bombarded city, from which she had to-day escaped. For many previous days the people of Dantzig had not known an hour of consecutive rest. Every day saw the sacrifice of the peaceful *Bürgers,* their wives and children, to disease, want or the flying bullets. The memory of these things was so vivid in the fugitive's mind that, ever and anon when a wind gust rose, she shuddered involuntarily as from a cannon-shot or falling building, and breathed freely to realize herself at the mercy of nature's bombs, and not those of wicked, cruel men.

It was very dark when she reached the first house in the village, to the right of which she struck off, as on a path frequently trodden. Just as usual she recognized the large supports for hanging the fishing nets, between this habitation and that of her father. Mechanically she raised her hand to ascertain whether the nets were there, and, finding them absent, she decided that no one had ventured to sea in the storm, and her father must be at home. With such thoughts, she reached the house. The blind of the window was closed, and the earliness of the hour did not explain the absence of light shining through the heart-shaped orifices in the same. Filled with vague alarm thereby, she stepped up to the door between the fences of rough pine boards which, right and left of the path, enclosed two small vegetable plots.

She raised the well-known latch which was attached to the upper part of the bisected door and felt under her feet the stone floor so often before trodden. Perfect quiet and darkness reigned.

What a contrast to former times! Then, when a stranger approached, the faithful dog announced it, or, if the slightest sound was heard outdoors, her father hastened to see if anything was wanted or had happened. What did his absence mean? Why was the fire opposite unkindled at the hour for cooking the potatoes? Where was her father? Why did her mother fail to prepare the evening meal? Such alarm filled her breast that she could not call. Immediately to the left of the door was the only sleeping-room of the house, which she hastily approached. On the threshold, coming out, she encountered her mother, looking pale and thin and carrying a train-oil lamp in her hand.

But the light was sufficient to show the observant daughter that for a long while the housewife's industrious hands had been idle. The large table stood, as formerly, near the stove of Dutch tiles, and the bench and stools were in their places. The jacks for plates and cups were on the wall (without their usual occupants, however), and the two large, gay-colored chests were on each side of the door. The eating vessels stood, as if long neglected, on the table, which it was formerly the mother's pride to keep shining like a mirror. Everywhere were indications of dirt and decay.

The breath of the visitor seemed to stop in her breast. Without a word, she laid her bundle on the nearest chest, and gazed at her mother entreatingly and awaited her greeting. But the old woman, failing to recognize her own child by the dim light, called out in a shrill voice, as she protected the lamp from the draught:

"Who are you?"

"It—is—I, mother!" gasped the younger woman with an intonation of reproach in her voice.

"Who?" cried the mother, in an incredulous tone.

"It is your Catherine!" returned the other; and added in great sympathy: "But, mother, what is the matter? Where is my father too?"

"Dead! Two months ago!" was the laconic reply, given with no sign of sorrow for the dead nor joy for the living.

The daughter was evidently overcome with the shock, and had to lean her head against the doorway for support. Presently she repeated faintly:

"Dead!"

"Yes, he had the fever, and it killed him. I had it too, and wish I had died," the old woman went on in the same unfeeling way, as she mechanically placed the lamp on the table and took her accustomed seat by the cold stove.

The daughter remained immovable. She had forgotten her weariness and troubles. What sufferings must her mother have undergone to receive the unexpected return of her only child without a word of welcome—without a single question as to why or whence she came. All her powers of sensation seemed concentrated upon her own personal misery. A long silence ensued, for the mother could not rejoice, and the daughter could not weep. At last, the younger woman unfastened her mantle, took it off, shook the wet from it and hung it on a peg over the chest. Then she removed her headkerchief and revealed a small, white cap with black bands, fastened over her blonde hair. This sign of mourning attracted the old woman's attention.

"Did you hear about your father?" she asked.

The daughter could only shake her head in negation, for emotion choked her.

"For whom do you wear mourning?"

"It is—for—my husband," gasped the younger woman, as from exhaustion she sank down upon the nearest seat.

The words brought back the recent past, and she began to weep violently. Her mother, in surprise and reproach, said:

"Why, he has been dead two years!"

"I was—married again," ejaculated the other between her sobs, "just after New Year—to a Spanish corporal. Three weeks ago to-day he was killed—yes, he was shot down on the wall."

The last sentence she uttered passionately, and afterward there was another pause.

The old woman leaned her arms upon the table and gazed into her daughter's face. The table separated the two, and the dim light fell upon the sunken cheeks and hollow eyes of the mother. Her gray hair was hanging in neglected locks from a cap of dark cotton, and her glance rested indifferently upon her child, whose full cheeks were glowing from her long and laborious journey.

"I am too warm!" exclaimed the latter, as she rose and laid aside a shawl which she had worn under her loose mantle.

This action roused the mother from her stupor. She quickly raised the lamp above her head, surveyed her daughter's figure and exclaimed in mingled horror and joy:

"Catherine, you will soon be confined!"

"That is why I came home," sighed the young wife. "My life was not safe in Dantzig. A few weeks ago a near neighbor of mine was killed in her room by a shell. I did not care for myself, but I did not want my child to perish. My husband's captain gave me a pass, and I came out."

Even to this the old woman made no reply. In those war times all experienced such horrors that they lost sympathy for each other. When a new tragedy came to their ears, it evoked neither comment nor interest.

Meantime, the snow had turned into a sleet, which beat loudly against the shutter, and the waves struck thundering blows upon the beach. The latter sound reminded Catherine of the many times she and her mother had sat anxiously awaiting her father's return from sea.

"And to think of finding my father dead!" sobbed the daughter. "All through the journey I comforted myself with the thought that he would take care of my child if I should die."

Again the mother vouchsafed no reply, but she rose and walked toward the other room.

"Where are you going, mother?" asked Catherine.

"To make a fire for you," was the reply.

The maternity of the daughter had at last conquered the stupefying power of suffering.

"Let me go!" begged the daughter. "When

the fire burns you can come to it. It will do you good, for you look very badly."

The mother again made no reply, but hobbled to the hearth. Near by lay some pieces of dry wood, from which she selected several pine knots and piled them in the fire-place. Then the daughter handed her two matches (taken from the old smoke-blackened box familiar to her childish days), with which she soon kindled a bright fire. This was the first blaze made since her sickness and convalescence, during which time she had been sustained by the daily offerings of compassionate neighbors.

CHAPTER II.

Catherine's father had been born and bred in Dantzig Heisternest, and followed the business of fishing all his days. He lived in the house which had belonged to his family from time immemorial, and thereby commanded the respect of the less fortunate inhabitants. To own a house which stood before many were built was no little distinction in the village. But he was unfortunate in his marriage. He chose a wife from Ceynowo, who was both a Pole and Romanist, and all the neighbors declared that she had brought him no blessings.

She did not go with her husband to church nor to the Lord's Table, and her walls were adorned with pictures of the Sacred Heart like all the other Poles. Neither were his parents pleased with the woman, although she brought well-filled chests into the house; but fortunately for them, they survived the marriage but a short while.

Every year brought a new child into the house, so taxing the father's resources as to force him to put his oldest girl into service at the age of fifteen.

The owner of the only shop in Hela had noticed the girl and offered to take her, and it turned out an advantage to leave home, as the star of misfortune soon rose upon the household and gradually removed the thirteen remaining children.

So the parents were left lonely and desolate. The father, while never cheerful, sought to console himself with other people's children, but the mother, declaring that the sight of them turned her heart to stone, shunned them. And right glad were the neighbors that she did so. They argued that God would not have taken from a good mother thirteen out of fourteen children, and therefore Frau Klaass was very wicked. As a proof thereof they cited the fact that her husband would not bring back Catherine to the childless home. Why did she bloom like a rose in Hela while all her brothers and sisters wasted away in the village?

The misfortunes which would evoke sympathy from thoughtful minds, when belonging to an object of the secret dislike of the ignorant and prejudiced, are considered righteous punishment for sins. These people could or would not see that sickness and sorrow had prematurely aged Frau Klaass, and that her last children had been born sickly. They did not see that many losses had made the mother fear to bring her only remaining child to the ill-fated house. But they vividly remembered how when a child was buried she would fall on her knees before the picture of the Sacred Heart or make a journey to the Roman Catholic church in Putzig Heisternest. And as religious antipathies and superstition are stranger than knowledge, they attributed to the Polish prayers, which they did not comprehend, a destructive and not beneficent power.

Of course Herr Klaass received his share of censure for marrying such a creature, and it was believed that thereby all his trouble came. But though he observed both this and his wife's isolation, he did not swerve from his attachment to her nor from his determination not to recall his only child to the desolate house.

Catherine was pleasantly situated in Hela. Her employer, Herr Deik, besides being a fisherman, owned the town shop, and also furnished accommodations to sailors when ships anchored in the bay·

The attractive appearance and skillful hand of the girl soon made her a valued member of the household. In the shop she became acquainted with the pilot of a stranded ship, who proposed to marry her. Although she was only eighteen years old and he much older, Herr Klaass and wife made no objection to the match. Indeed, they thought that the important pilot of a large brig did their child great honor to marry her. Catherine also made no objection, for though her lover was neither young nor handsome, he could tell wonderful stories about Stockholm—about America—about the Indies. Besides, he promised to bring her pretty clothes and trinkets from abroad. Everybody told her that she was fortunate to make such a marriage. Lastly, she thought with pleasure of standing before the altar in a black woolen dress and bridal wreath, instead of her present costume of narrow skirt and printed linen jerkin.

So the marriage took place and, as it happened, was a peaceful one. The pilot secured a comfortable home in Dantzig for his wife, who was an industrious and successful manager. He was always greeted with hearty welcome when he returned from a voyage, and he never failed to bring the promised present from foreign lands.

Herr Klaass and wife paid their daughter a visit two years after her marriage, and were often the recipients of her bounty.

Six years passed away thus auspiciously. In the the fall of the year 1811, the brig, *Marian*, once more entered the harbor of Dantzig; but alas, without its pilot! Soon after leaving Newcastle, where grain was delivered and coal taken in, the unfortunate man had been knocked from his post at the wheel into the water and could not be rescued. When Catherine learned her husband's fate, he had been weeks under the waves of the North Sea. The young widow's grief over the death of one who had been all kindness to her was genuine; but it, naturally, did not last as long as if his absence had altered her daily life. She soon turned her thoughts to the legacy, which the pilot had often told her she would find in the hands of the business firm for which he worked, in case of his sudden death. But inquiry into the matter soon proved otherwise. It appeared, from the papers taken from his person and other testimony, that he had, two years before, withdrawn his small earnings from the custody of the house and lost them in a speculation. So the widow was left to depend upon the small balance of wages due the pilot and the money she had in hand, which could sustain her only a short time. She must find employment for her support. This, fortunately, was easily gotten by industrious women, as the town was full of troops. She chose to take the washing of the officers who were quartered near her, and her satisfactory work brought much attention to her. Added to this, her fresh beauty and lively manners would have made the position dangerous to a less prudent woman. She had led a married life for six years and done her full duty as wife. She had imagined herself as happy as possible with the pilot, but as she contrasted her quiet, lonely life then, with the present daily stir and admiration, she, for the first time, realized that her husband had been too old and slow for her.

When one day a Spanish corporal came to the house, she could not help thinking how much more attractive life would be with such a mate than the other. This man was young and handsome, and was immediately struck with Catherine's looks. But they could not communicate save by glances, as neither knew more in French than "Good day!" or "What do you want?" or such simple things. But in spite of this disability, the corporal came again and again to the house to see the widow, and they understood each other's love without words. Neither of them knew anything of that harmony of heart and soul which makes the union of a pair complete, but their attachment was genuine of its kind, so that when Catherine appeared without her badge of mourning one day, the lover with difficulty articulated, "*Belle femme, je vous aime!*" and enclosed her willing form in his arms. Then the woman first realized the bliss of reciprocated love.

The pilot had been dead fourteen months when the Spaniard led his widow to the altar. And what a contrast were the two marriages! Six years of the first had passed peacefully away, while the days and weeks of the second were full of storms. For months consecutively the pilot left his wife without concern, but the corporal was never easy in mind when his duties separated him from her. Though he loved her as his own life, he, judging her by the frivolous women whom he had encountered everywhere on the march, feared to trust her far.

Thus love and jealousy, pleasure and pain, trust and distrust diversified the married life of the handsome pair. From fighting on the wall the husband would escape to spend a few moments with his wife, and, from her arms, as quickly return to his post, uncertain whether he would ever see her again. Day and night Catherine, fearing at every murderous thunder of artillery the death of her beloved, and becoming, as the siege progressed, more and more subjected to want, in spite of his best efforts to supply them, underwent a trial which even her strong constitution could not stand. Her cheeks lost their color and her eyes their brightness, and her condition so excited the compassion of the captain for whom she washed that he offered her a pass to escape from the city. But Catherine loved her husband too well to desert him thus, and, only after his death, did she accept the pass, and with her small possessions of money and clothes reach her native village in the manner described.

The sad state of things at home—her father's death and her mother's sickness—would have completely prostrated her had not the escape from the terrible scenes of Dantzig been the supreme necessity of the moment. She possessed enough money to supply the family necessities for awhile and render her mother more comfortable, and this was a consolation.

The neighbor who brought food to the sick one next morning as usual kindly procured for Catherine all she wanted, and in a few hours the house looked like another place. Thus no one is so unhappy as not to be able to mitigate the sorrow of another.

Old Frau Klaass, as the neighbors called Catherine's mother, though she was just in the fifties, had ever since her husband's death lain upon her bed in a kind of stupor. She took no interest in life, and did not exercise that resistance to disease which makes people in a certain sense masters of their lives. But the sudden arrival of her daughter furnished her with the best cure for this. She left her bed, busied herself about the house, and became cheerful instead of melancholy. And thus, like many others, from the moment she helped another she helped herself.

In a few days Catherine had told all of her history to her mother and to the villagers who came in one by one to greet her, to look at her and question her.

But neither party was satisfied with what she related. She seemed to them, in her costume of a *Bürgerfrau*, both rich and distinguished, and yet she represented herself as desolate and impoverished.

Eleven years of absence from her home had fully estranged her from it, and she keenly felt the truth. No less did they understand it, but they expected to find their acquaintance unchanged, and were offended that their hope was deceived.

Again and again was she asked to picture the horrors of the siege, from which her soul revolted, or explain what she was going to do with her gold pieces, of which she was supposed to possess many, as she had had one changed in the town. Her laconic report of the condition of Dantzig and her quiet assurance that she had spent her only gold piece only received unbelief.

The people were convinced that Catherine was rich, for Frau Klaass had often told them of all her daughter's beautiful things which she saw in Dantzig. Who could forget the walnut chest of drawers with the lion head brass knobs on the mirror, with a row of angels painted on its frame? And what of the curtains and all the tankards and plates which the pilot had brought her from England? Besides, who could not see the lovely coat, silk apron and silk kerchief which she now wore? And wouldn't the *Bürgerfrau* Frau Deik, whom she had served, be proud of such a mantle?

For Catherine to make answer that she never expected to recover any of her property in the beleaguered town and that she must now find work to enable her to live gave immense discontent and no credence.

If she could have been more communicative, and mingled more freely with her questioners, the result would have been happier. But as she shrank from the impertinence and indelicacy of her visitors, in a few days she gained the undisturbed rest which she so sadly needed.

But, meantime, gossiping tongues were busily engaged at her expense.

It happened that Frau Klaass on the morning after her daughter's arrival, either from mistake or boasting, announced to some one that Catherine was the widow of a rich and distinguished officer in the Spanish army. This news spread like wildfire through the village, and thus getting back to the daughter was contradicted by her. Later, she took occasion to explain to one of the most sensible men in the village, who in youth had visited Spain as a sailor, that her second husband was the son of poor people and, in spite of gallantry, had never risen higher than corporal in the army. This the old man repeated to introduce his favorite theme of the gardens, vineyards, castles and grandeurs of Spain, and in the passage of the same from mouth to mouth, both were united, and everybody believed that Catherine had married a rich Spaniard and that, as soon as the siege of Dantzig was relieved, she would possess great wealth. And on the strength of the report, not a few beggars visited Catherine. The universal want of the land extended to Hela, where all business ceases for the winter, and mendicants were abundant. If the widow had been able to respond to these demands, her city clothes, speech and manners would have been considered appropriate to her station. But her protestations of inability to relieve them in view of her dress and appearance angered them. They told how some one had seen the gold-piece changed for her, and some one else had found fresh meat cooking (a thing that no one else could afford), and still another had surprised her cutting baby clothes out of large fine sheets, as if for a little prince. Who considered that the gold-piece was the poor woman's last one? Who believed that she had bought the luxurious food to restore her mother to health? Who thought that she was obliged to cut up the sheets for lack of other material?

Finally, some one suggested that if Catherine was not so opulent as they thought, the only explanation was that she was not the lawful wife of the Spaniard. This report rapidly spread and, as usual in small-minded communities, was gladly credited. Very soon she was called the officer's Catherine, and the women contemptuously declared themselves thankful not to possess her fine things at such a price. At last, it was pretty well understood that the Spaniard was not dead as reported, but had abandoned his mistress, causing her to seek refuge in her misery with the mother whom she had neglected in her prosperity. The subject of this injustice only found it out by the scorn and anger of her mother, and the knowledge but strengthened her in her reticence and reserve. Her health was very poor, and the approaching trial made her anxious and regretful that she had not sought some larger place where she could have worked up to her confinement, instead of sitting idle all the time. The winter progressed rapidly, and the thick frost on the windows and the sands covered in a deep sheet of undisturbed snow made a cheerless sight. But the necessity of raising her mother's spirits caused Catherine to present to her hopes which her own mind did not entertain. She would say that things would be better when the summer came—when the child would be there, and she could go to Dantzig to recover her property; and even if she could not do that, she might go to Spain, where she knew her husband's parents would help his wife and child.

Great ignorance of the world made the old woman rejoice in such plans, and gave her surprise that their contemplation did not equally please her daughter. In proportion as the young widow thought little of securing help from her husband's relations, the old woman thought more of it, and, at last, there was no person in Heisternest more convinced of the grandeur and power which Catherine might secure from them than Frau Klaass herself. While the mother's mind was full of golden visions, the daughter's of dread forebodings, the new year set in.

It was the very coldest night of the winter, when doors were barred with snow, and the wind took away the breath, that Frau Klaass stood under a

"THE CORAL NECKLACE AND THE EARRINGS ARE BOTH YOURS."—*See Page* 41.

starlit sky and knocked at the window of a neighbor. She wanted her to assist her daughter, and and begged her to hasten. But the houses were far apart, walking difficult, and the woman old, so that some time elapsed ere they reached the one who no longer needed their services. The low cry of a babe and the sighs of the mother greeted their ears on entering.

Catherine feebly summoned Frau Klaass and gasped:

"I am gone! Don't—forsake—my—child—mother!"

Both women tried to console her and rendered such help as they could; but greatest skill would have failed to restore her. The poor sufferer's strength visibly decreased, and the agonized mother, feeling that death was imminent, placed the babe where her dying glance could fall upon it.

Just as the first rays of the sun fell on the frozen window-pane poor Catherine opened her eyes and articulated indistinctly: "Mother—my child!" and closed them forever.

Frau Klaass stood by the corpse of her fourteenth and last child and, as she looked upon the new-born infant, she gave it, in memory of its mother, the name of Catherine.

CHAPTER III.

Catherine Carvallos had been dead only a short while when the siege of Dantzig was relieved. The French abandoned Prussia, and the overthrow of the Emperor Napoleon quickly ensued. Thus the Fatherland rose Phœnix-like from the ashes of war and rapine into the beauty of peace and plenty.

And though the years between 1806–13 witnessed the sacrifice of many loved ones and much property, it was not long ere a new generation knew these horrors only by hearsay. Peaceful avocations were rapidly resumed, and the tools of agriculture soon removed from the battlefields all signs of the recent bloodshed. Abundant crops waved over the soil lately saturated in human gore, and overhead spread the quiet, ethereal blue sky which had witnessed countless wounded and dying. Now throughout Europe the laborer could again follow unmolested his plow, the traveller his journey, the sailor his voyage, and the vessel drop anchor where it would.

But meantime life went hard with Frau Klaass, for she did not possess those personal surroundings necessary to make her a sharer of the benefits of this condition of things. The house in Hela which had no male occupant was naturally the abode of want, for without the labor of the fisherman there was no reward from the fish-haul. If Frau Klaass had sold her small but good dwelling on her husband's death, she would have fared much better. The mayor of the village, who was little Catherine's guardian, very truly represented to her how much she could do for the child by disposing of her property, but she was decided and stubborn to make it Catherine's inheritance like all her ancestors'.

And although the good man warned her that she would suffer for and repent of her decision, she remained unchanged. Truly, she soon proved his words in suffering if not in repentance!

A frame, weakened by great physical and mental agony, was incapable of the activity necessary to support herself and grandchild, and she became more perplexed as to how to make ends meet. Finally, when she could neither cultivate her small garden nor pay taxes to save her furniture from the executor's hands, she sold her house to a neighbor for a small annuity.

Frau Klaass had always been one of the most industrious and orderly women in the village, but, because of her misfortunes and unpopularity, no one knew it besides her husband. At least, they said that she was as boastful of herself as if she was the only good housewife in the world. They declared that her pride—which was offensive enough when Catherine married the pilot, had transgressed all bounds when, on the poor woman's death, she sold her fur mantle, shawl and mourning to bury her like a rich person and put a stone with her name and a Bible verse over her grave, like the pastor's in Hela. That the mother was thus honoring the grave of her last child they did not take into account.

If Frau Klaass had retained her own home this pride would have been considered an honor to her. But who does not know that when one starts down the hill of ill-luck everybody will give him an onward blow? To be proud and live in a rented hut was an unpardonable offense.

Meanwhile, the hostile tongues could bring no accusation other than this against Frau Klaass. She sought work of any kind and did it faithfully. There was nothing too hard for her to do, and she never uttered a complaint. But she never spoke a word more than necessary to settle her business, and it seemed that she had vowed to communicate as little as possible with her fellow-creatures.

Her manners made her unpleasant to every one, and only those who wanted her services ever approached her. And thus little Catherine became the sole companion of the old woman, and on her was lavished such love as was given to all the lost. Seldom did the grandmother lose sight of the child, who was her hope, her joy, her all. The grandchild, unlike her children, whom the greatest anxiety and care could not preserve, seemed to grow and thrive, unassisted.

Unselfish love often made Frau Klaass deny herself something to better nourish Catherine, and, as the latter grew and developed into so different a child from the other Helans, the grandmother doted more upon her and believed both that she was given for a consolation to her and was reserved for some high destiny. Just as soon as Catherine could understand her, Frau Klaass began to tell about her mother and her fine house in Dantzig—about her handsome father and his distant home, and soon assured her that, one of these days, she should go to her father's home to live in luxury with his distinguished relations. At first such stories impressed Catherine like fairy-tales do other children. The words arrested her attention, and their incomprehensibility her curiosity. But by degrees it came into her mind that she was the chief figure in the narratives, and, with this thought as an entering wedge, her imagination soon ran far beyond her grandmother's wildest dreams.

Little Catherine was not quite six years old, when she sat one Christmas eve by her grandmother's side in their small bedroom. During the forenoon, everybody else in the village had gone or sent to Putzig to get something for the next day, and Catherine had seen candles, apples and nuts destined for the various Christmas trees. But there was to be no tree for her! In winter, Frau Klaass could only spin yarn and knit stockings for the neighbors, and by utmost endeavor only secured daily bread. While the rest were in Putzig, the old woman and child repaired to the neighboring wood and secured the dry sticks and fir-cones which now warmed and lighted the narrow room.

Catherine had been sitting silent some minutes on the bench before the stove, when, induced either by the sight of the fire or memory of the children's prattle, she suddenly asked:

"Grandmother, who is Holy Christ?"

"He is the beloved Son of God, and to-morrow is His birthday," replied the old woman, resuming after a little pause. "Every year, when His birthday comes, He visits the earth."

"But who brings Christian his new boots?" continued the child earnestly.

Frau Klaass did not seem to hear the question, and Catherine repeated:

"Does the Holy Christ bring new boots to Christian and to nobody else? Does He only go to the mayor's?"

"Why, He gives all children something, especially when they are good," was the unguarded reply.

For a few moments the child was silent, and then burst out impatiently and reproachfully:

"Why don't He bring me something, for I am good? And my mother is in heaven, and ought to send me something! I *will* have boots, too!"

With this, she buried her small face in her hands and wept bitterly. It was, indeed, an unusual thing for Catherine to cry, and the sight of her distress moved the grandmother to compassion. But what could she say or do to comfort her? Memory flew back to the first days of her married life, when, at this hour of every Christmas eve, her husband would return from market, laden with apples and nuts for their children's tree. But now they were gone, and there was no one in the wide world but herself to think of the poor orphan before her, and there was nothing she could do. Never before had she felt the sting of poverty so keen or pity for the unfortunate child so great!

In sheer desperation she glanced around the small room, and her eye fell upon a small fir bush with the pile of fuel brought from the woods. At once her decision was made.

"Hush, Catherine, hush!" she said soothingly, "for if you don't the Holy Christ will not come in, and He is outside the door there and hears you crying!"

The child ceased weeping and looked up in mingled surprise and awe. Her large, dark eyes were still filled with tears, but her grief was over. After glancing from door to window in excited expectation, she looked into her grandmother's face with an expression of perfect trust which sent a pang to the old woman's heart. Without a word Frau Klaass took the child's hand, led her into the adjoining dark kitchen, placed her on the bench in the corner of the hearth, and told her to sit still until called. Returning to the bedroom, she took up the bush, fastened it in a crack in the floor just before the stove, and made a step toward the door. But she suddenly paused as the thought came that the gift, the most important addition to the Christmas tree, was wanting. Irresolutely she stood enduring the agony which only the indigent can feel.

Then she hastened to the window, and throwing open the blind, satisfied herself that no witness was near. Carefully replacing the shutter, she returned to the stove and thoughtfully gazed upon the fir-bush.

At last her scruples seemed overcome as she cautiously and with suspicious, roaming eyes took from her bosom a little bag which was secured to a string around her neck. Tremblingly she drew forth from its depths two objects and hung them at different points on the green twigs of the bush. Then she stepped back and viewed them with extreme delight. Lastly she cut her only candle into three equal portions, set them at proper distances on the bush, lighted them, opened the door, and called Catherine to see what the Holy Christ had brought her.

Out of the black darkness of the kitchen the poor little child entered the well-known chamber. But she seemed to have stepped into an enchanted palace.

As faint as was the light from the stove and the three candles, their radiance almost blinded Catherine and impressed her as a flood of sunshine filling the room. To her eyes the little bush was a large tree, and best of all, among the green bushes glittered a pair of large gold earrings and a coral necklace. Unspeakable wonder and admiration filled the breast of the innocent, and she stood dumb and motionless, as if enchanted. She displayed no natural inclination to question or handle.

After some minutes her eyes slowly traversed the room, as if to try to prove her own identity.

Then Frau Klaass tenderly took her hand and said:

"Look here! Look well! See what the Holy Christ has brought you!"

"Me! Me!" gasped the child, in rapture.

"Yes, you. The coral necklace and the earrings are both yours. They belong to you!" was the exultant reply.

"Mine! Mine!" repeated Catherine, as she drew nearer to the tree and stretched out her arms toward it.

"Stop! Stop!" said the grandmother, in a different tone. "They are only yours to look at, for the Holy Christ will take them away."

The child dropped her arms, as if shot.

Now, Frau Klaass, although she was delighted to have given her grandchild pleasure, wanted her to leave before the small candles burned out, and besides, she began to repent of showing the jewels to her. But when she tried to send her out, Catherine clung so beseechingly to her skirt that her resolution failed. Moreover, when the beloved object entreatingly cried "Please, please let me touch the pretties!" the old woman took her up in her arms for that purpose. The child seized first the necklace and then the earrings, and viewed them with supreme delight. Then Frau Klaass forgot her desire to remove her, placed her on the floor and fastened the chain around her neck, the earrings in her ears. During this process, Catherine did not move a muscle. She seemed to be nailed to the floor. Her head was raised stiffly in the air, and the big earrings were a heavy burden to it.

She kept her eyes proudly fastened on the three dim candles, except when she glanced approvingly down upon her necklace which (being her mother's) reached to her short waist. Suddenly she turned toward the door, but her arm was caught by her grandmother as she said:

"Where now?"

Her voice was indicative of indescribable triumph as she answered:

"To see the children!"

"No, indeed!" was the stern response of Frau Klaass, as she began to remove the precious jewels from their possessor.

When this was done, she ordered the child to resume her seat in the dark kitchen. But a few minutes sufficed to remove all trace of the Christmas tree and to recall the banished. When the granddaughter reappeared, the dazzling beauties were gone, the candles out, the stove door shut, and the train-oil lamp on the table cast a feeble, dismal light just around a small circle. The sight was too much for the poor child, and she quickly ran to the farthest corner of the room and turned her back upon it all.

Frau Klaass observed this conduct, but did not speak to Catherine. The truth was, she was trying to devise some means of preventing Catherine from telling any one about the jewels. In a moment of temptation, she had revealed to an indiscreet child what she had so far concealed with greatest care.

Those precious jewels were the last gift of the Spanish Carvallos to his wife, and Catherine valued them as mementoes of him, and desired her child, if a girl, to inherit them. No sooner was her daughter dead than the old woman concealed the ornaments on her person, and made a vow to tell no one of their existence until her grandchild was old enough to wear them. Her wisdom in this conduct was apparent, for if the villagers had known that she held such valuables, little assistance in charity or work would she have gotten. Neither sickness nor want had induced her to give up the only legacy of her grandchild, but the orphan's pitiful wail for a gift from above had overcome her prudence and jeopardized her treasure. Suppose Catherine should tell! The mayor, who was the child's guardian, would take away his ward's property and summon her before the court. And she had heard of people getting around the law and embezzling others' property. Alas, for the beautiful earrings and necklace! What account would be taken of her acting for the child's best interest? Another thought gave her more concern. What if one were to try to steal the jewels from her? She was weak and defenseless, and the very thought of a robber made her hair stand on end.

It was, therefore, most apparent that she must, by some means, prevent the child from revealing the existence of her jewels. But to do this, she must find out what Catherine thought about it, and why she sat so sullenly in the corner.

So she rose, took the loaf of bread from the table-drawer, cut off the child's supper and called her to get it. Catherine answered the summons, but did not touch the bread. Instead of that, she looked searchingly around and whispered:

"My necklace! My earrings!"

They are gone away!" said the other, solemnly. "Real far away!"

"Far away!" was the despairing reply.

"Yes, taken away by the Holy Christ," continued the old woman impressively. "He brings them once a year to be seen and touched. But if you don't tell anybody about them—not even Christian or Barbe, He will, when you are grown up, bring them and leave them with you, so that you can show them to *everybody*. But remember what I say, you must not speak of them now! Not a word about the tree, the lights and the jewels! Do you hear me, Catherine? Not a word to a soul!"

The child understood the threatening import of the last sentences, but with the love of mystery and contradiction peculiar to most children, she replied:

"But what if I do tell?"

This question surprised and provoked the old woman, and giving way to her anger, she replied, with the national expression of threat:

"Then the *Gottseibeiuns* will come and wring your head off!"

Something like the palsy seemed to seize the face and limbs of the child. She spoke no other word, ate her bread, and went to sleep. And the grandmother went to rest beside her with the fond hope that the subject was forever hushed.

This hope was strengthened next day by the fact that Catherine said nothing about the matter. But Frau Klaass was, like many another guardian, ignorant of the nature entrusted to her charge, and the absence of reference but proved the activity of the little one's thoughts on the subject. Every time the other children spoke of Christmas, Catherine longed to relate her beautiful experience, but terror of the predicted punishment restrained her tongue.

One evening, some time after Christmas, Frau Klaass having to deliver a lot of spun yarn to the owner, and thinking she would soon return, charged Catherine to stay in the house quietly. But the neighbor being away from home, and the old woman in need of the two *Groschen* of pay, time passed on while her return was awaited, and darkness fell upon the cottage of which the little orphan was sole occupant. The child mounted in a chair and made films on the window panes with her breath as she looked for her grandmother's returning figure. When it grew too dark to distinguish objects outside, she dismounted from her chair at the window, ran into the kitchen and sat down in the very place where she had awaited the arrival of the Holy Christ. As she thus sat, the thought occurred that in the other room she might find the tree with its dazzling lights and jewels. Imagination was brilliant and hope great as she softly opened the door and looked in.

The silence and darkness roused feelings of mingled disappointment and resentment. In her innocent mind what had once happened must happen again, and the dark kitchen be followed by the brilliant bedroom. The contrast to her hopes soured her temper, and she stamped her little foot and vowed she *would* have the pretty tree again.

When this fit of wrath subsided she began to think how she could induce the Holy Christ to return. Finally she curled herself up on the bench by the stove, pressed her small face into the corner and whispered:

"Holy Christ! Holy Christ! Please bring back the tree and the earrings and the necklace. I will be so glad!"

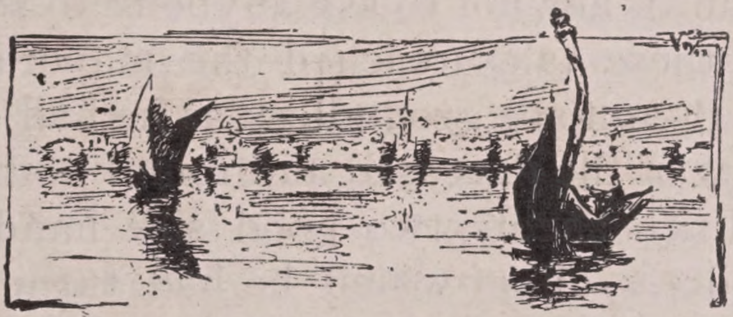
But scarcely had she articulated the words before she remembered her grandmother's terrible words: "If you speak of the tree and its treasures, then the *Gottseibeiuns* will come and wring your head off!"

In the darkness and loneliness of the house, the remembrance gave her peculiar alarm. She shook with terror and pressed her hands against her eyes. Suddenly the room seemed in a blaze of light, and the tree, with all its beauties, sprang into position. But fear of the *Gottseibeiuns* prevented her from opening her eyes, and presently she felt his heavy hand on her neck.

With a piercing cry of terror, she sprang up and —her glance fell upon her grandmother's figure entering the doorway. She rushed to her side, clung to her dress and could not answer her question as to the cause of alarm. Frau Klaass attributed the child's distress to being alone in the house, and by the time the lamp was lit, all signs of it had disappeared.

Catherine's sudden recovery was due to the agreeable realization that the *Gottseibeiuns* had not killed her, though she had spoken of the forbidden things.

Thus the grandmother's deception induced a corresponding action from her grandchild, and deciding to conceal it only from her, the child rejoiced in the prospect of telling every one about her wonderful Christmas tree. So for the rest of the evening Catherine was bright and frolicsome, and that night talked in her sleep about her valued visitation from the Holy Christ.



CHAPTER IV.

Very soon a wonderful report was circulated through the village. It was said that Frau Klaass had been acting the part of a hypocrite, since she seemed to have scarcely enough to eat, and yet possessed a boxful of rings, earrings and such things, which had belonged to the officer's Catherine. Besides, she must have more money than she pretended, to give her grandchild a finer Christmas tree than anybody else in the village, and it was very mean in her not to ask anybody to see it!

When these tales reached the mayor's ears, he declared them to be groundless, as he had examined the effects of the deceased and found nothing but a pair of linen sheets, two good silk handkerchiefs and one dress, all of which he had turned over to Frau Klaass for the benefit of his ward. When it was answered that the child had told the facts, he said it was silly to listen to her prattle, as, doubtless, the grandmother's tales had been represented as true by Catherine. Everybody knew that Frau Klaass had punished her more than once for tattling, and no person with five senses should listen to it.

But while the mayor usually possessed great influence over public opinion, in this instance he failed to make the desired impression. The woman who started the report maintained that though Catherine was a dark-skinned, ugly child, she was very clever for her age, and that you could depend upon what she said she had seen as true. But even supposing Frau Klaass had not secreted any valuables of her daughter's, then they must believe that she got them in a dishonest way. Hadn't everybody noticed how, for years, she would not look one in the face or have anything to do with one? Why might the Spaniard not have taught his wife arts, and she her mother?

She was a Pole, who could do more things than eat bread. When once the public thought had taken this turn, there was no limit to the extravagance of the forms it assumed. Some said that the old woman had buried money, which the officer had stolen and given to Catherine. Others believed her in league with the devil, through whose gift she had unusual power, because Catherine had spoken of the *Gottseibeiuns* to the children. And this and that person, by way of corroborating such a view, recalled instances in which some ill luck had befallen him after an unpleasantness with Frau Klaass.

It was with great difficulty that the mayor and schoolmaster prevented the villagers from making application to the pastor of the church in Hela.

What availed their repeated explanations that Frau Klaass had caused her grandchild, like all her own children, to be duly christened in the Lutheran Church, and that her husband and the child's mother were orthodox members of the same church? Of what use was it to remind them that the old woman sent the little one to school, to catechism and everything good? They were bent upon believing ill of the poor creature, who did nothing to right herself in their estimation. But as all were afraid to deny her request or to encounter her, Frau Klaass clung more tenderly to her grandchild and was really better off than before the persecution.

Thus, two years passed. So long as the grandmother kept a moderate amount of strength, she managed to support herself and the child. But like many people of laborious lives, old age brought on her a feebleness which prostrated her at intervals and went by the name of "turn." Very often she was not able to go out to work, and suffered from weak knees, short breath and diminished vision. At last, she could only sit in the room and spin, which she did from early morning till twilight.

But the old woman's weakness developed prematurely the child's powers. She could manage the household as soon as her little hands learned the uses of pot and dish, tub and broom. She brought from the woods as much fuel as a grown person, and fetched and carried her grandmother's work and pay to and from any part of the village. And when she learned to knit, her work aided in a small way to defray family expenses. She was in school, undoubtedly, the brightest and most industrious child, and if ever her efforts flagged, the grandmother held a sure weapon to spur her on.

"If you don't learn," she would say, "then you can't write to your relations far away and ask them to help you!"

For Catherine, even more than the old woman, cherished the deceitful hopes, which her mother had, unintentionally, planted in Frau Klaass's mind. Otherwise, the years slipped peacefully by. After the betrayal of the visit of Holy Christ, no second Christmas tree came to the child.

She had learned that the Holy Christ did not bring the jewels, but that her grandmother kept them with a red silk handkerchief adorned with large flowers, and a broad, black silk apron, carefully put away for her. All of these things would have looked strange in any house in the village, but, contrasting as they did with the miserable dwelling and surroundings of Frau Klaass, they seemed to Catherine objects of enchanting loveliness.

The grandmother wore the earrings and necklace around her neck like a talisman, and preserved the handkerchief and apron in the side drawer of the large, yellow chest which she had retained when she sold her house because it was her marriage dowry. This chest now contained little more than the two precious articles of dress, and it was the greatest pleasure of Catherine's life to look in upon her future possessions. These few relics and the value set upon them by the old woman caused the imagination of the child to dwell more and more upon a vague but elevated destiny, in spite of the necessitous present.

If ever Catherine saw any other child with any adornment, such as a string of tin beads painted red, which would fill the little ones with envy, she would invariably turn from them in scorn. She had learned better than to discourse about her treasures, and yet she could not resist saying sometimes that when she was grown she would wear very different ornaments from those. Such remarks, in view of the child's shabby clothing, excited the most unkind rejoinders.

"Your mother had so much," one said to her when her jacket was particularly ragged. "Why don't you dress better?"

"Did your old skirt come out of the bag where your grandmother keeps the jewels?" chimed in another.

"Did that old apron come down to you from your father?" added another.

And when Catherine surpassed all the rest in school and was praised by her teacher for reading and writing well, she would hear on every hand in recess such things as:

"You may write all over the world and will not find your father's relations. Everybody knows he was either a gypsy or a witch, by your black skin, and he taught your mother and grandmother all their tricks."

Until the child was eight or nine years old she listened to these insults, sometimes indifferent, sometimes replying the best she could. But after that they wounded and offended her so that she kept out of the way of other children. No sooner was school over than she left her companions and, being thus much alone, brooded over the beautiful future of her grandmother's creation more than ever. Any child who lives not in the present, but silently dwells upon an anticipated future, ceases to be companionable to those of similar age, and therefore friendless among them.

This reserve and taciturnness was quickly attributed to laziness and obstinacy, and punished as such, but the punishment did but confirm her in her ways. From young and old she had suffered so much injustice and misapprehension that she soon became indifferent to both, and gave to her enemies equal scorn and dislike. This feeling was duly nourished and encouraged by the grandmother.

On one point Catherine resembled her persecutors —she was proud and ambitious. By inheritance the child possessed that same quickness and intelligence which had called Frau Deik's attention to her mother, and thereby made her fortune. When she first entered the schoolroom the teacher was struck with her appearance, and in consequence of her obedience and industry, soon began to hold her up as example to the rest of his pupils. Of course this honor but intensified their dislike for her. It was a sore trial to have the object of their scorn and vituperation set before them as model. And the school-master's praise naturally increased Catherine's pride and haughtiness toward her companions. Finally she felt a kind of fierce joy because the children hated her, and because the teacher's commendation of her scholarship tended to prove her grandmother's teaching, that she was superior to them all.

There was only one child in the village who ever had anything to do with Catherine. It was Christian, the mayor's son. He was two years older than she, and was already thinking of attending the pastor's *Kinderlehre* in Hela, from which he might, if he fancied, try the sailor's life for a few years before settling down to be a fisherman. Christian was a robust, well-grown boy, whom the mayor often took on the sea to render assistance in the hauling of the nets, and, because he was the only son of the most important man in the villages, he assumed the right to lord it over the other children.

This boy, from a small child, could never bear to hear the jeers and taunts cast upon the little orphan. He did not spare her himself, but when others attacked her in his presence, his fist was doubled for defense. He valued the fact of her surpassing all the others at school and praised her for the accomplishment.

But, outside, in play, when once or twice she took part and outstripped him, there were no bounds to his anger, and he would strike her with the will almost to draw blood. But when the others, thus encouraged, drew near with similar design, forthwith, his vengeance would veer round against them and transform the enemy into friend.

But Catherine did not thank him for his quasi-protection. She hated him as the usual source of all her troubles. He would always take precedence in the games and call upon her to admire his strength and dexterity. And, if she could not express the desired wonder concerning his feats, then he would make her rue it surely. Thus she grew to fear him, and her former dislike, nourished by this feeling, became all-powerful.

CHAPTER V.

One afternoon in midsummer the beach was dotted with groups of women, anxiously awaiting the return of the fishermen, but the sun was almost down before the first sail came into view. Scarcely had this boat reached the water goldened by the setting sun than another and still another followed, and commotion and good humor reigned among expectant ones on the shore. From every cottage-door came forth women and children, breathless and full of interest, some carrying baskets and tubs to empty the fish into, and others knives with which to clean them. The lines in front of the houses were made ready for hanging the fish, and the salt vessels and other preparations for packing and smoking red herrings and flounders were in place.

Amidst all this haste and industry of the grown people, many babies were crawling around like crabs in the warm, white sand. The larger children were playing games on the water's edge, noisy, strong, healthy boys and girls, with blonde hair and blue or gray eyes, looking honestly abroad above sunburnt cheeks. They were pressing as far out in the water as their short garments would allow, and were clothed poorly enough.

If, now and then, a light, rapid wave shocked the flesh or dampened the clothing of one of the number, a breathless scream was uttered and echoed by all the other merry companions, but such an event only proved incentive to the victim to press farther in and find more sources of amusement.

But, even on this occasion, Catherine did not participate in the fun. She was lying stretched out on the bottom of a boat which was upturned for calking, with her head supported on her arm and eyes turned far beyond the children over the sea. She was now fourteen years old, and remarkably well-grown for her age. Her dark, rich hair was twisted into a coil behind, but one truant, curly lock fell over her low, broad brow and red cheek. As the color of the hair distinguished the girl from the rest, so did her skin and large, earnest, black eyes. Her costume of faded striped-frieze skirt and outgrown jacket was poorest of all the shabby costumes. But the beautiful brown arms that protruded far below their covering and the well-shaped neck, which the jerkin failed to conceal, made her none the less attractive.

No one seemed to notice her presence or beauty, however, for the women were fully occupied with their preparation for the fish-haul, and the children equally absorbed in their sports. But Christian, tiring of this play, came on the beach and began to throw pebbles to see them glance again and again on the water before sinking forever. Soon the other boys followed to put their efforts against his, and, naturally, the whole crowd of children then deserted their wading to watch and applaud these feats of skill. But Christian, as Haaman was dissatisfied with homage as long as a Mordecai assented not, kept turning to Catherine to see what she thought of this or that effort.

When the girl showed no signs of observing him, his zeal was but quickened, and, after his companions applauded for making the pebble spring six times, he proudly approached her and said:

"Catherine, did you see that?"

"What?" replied she indifferently.

"Six times the stone jumped!" he said in a boastful voice.

Catherine vouchsafed no reply, but settled herself more firmly on the boat, making a pretty model for a sea-nymph. But no such idea entered the minds of her companions. The women thought her lazy, the children cross; and Christian, determined to make her flatter his self-love, repeated:

"Nobody else can do that!"

Catherine smiled scornfully.

This angered the boy, and he cried sharply:

"Do better then! Do it, if you can!"

"I can do it, but I will not!" she returned.

Her defiance exasperated Christian beyond expression. He hastily approached the boat, seized her by the arm and said threateningly:

"You shall do it!"

"I dare it!" cried the girl, freeing her arm with an effort and springing to the ground on the opposite side of the boat. Hastily she walked to the water's edge, took a shining pebble from the beach, bent her slender body, extended her right hand and slung the missile with such force that it sprang again and again until in the distance it fell beneath a wave.

"Eight times," she said, turning with nonchalance to resume her former easy position. But Christian rapidly placed himself in her pathway. Catherine stopped and cast a proud, scornful glance upon her persecutor. Next instant he had aimed a blow at her with his clenched fist which, avoiding by a quick bend, she returned with such expedition and force as to lay him sprawling on the sand. Of course this was a signal for all the other children to attack the offender.

Two stout boys pinioned her arms so that the rest could pelt her with sand and stones. While Catherine was laboring to free herself, the mayor's wife came forward and ordered the boys off.

This woman was very large in figure, and presented an imposing mien. Having drawn the girl from the circle of her enemies, she administered a sound slap on her face, pushed her roughly away and exclaimed:

"Go home this minute! You seem to set old Satan loose wherever you go! First you lie down there like a seal so that one can 't tell whether you are asleep or awake, and when you get up begin quarreling and fighting. Take yourself home and beware of falling into my hands again!"

Immediately turning upon her son, who had risen from his degradation, the irate woman continued, while she shook him well:

"You young rascal, why *won't* you let her alone? If you *don't*, I 'll make you repent it!"

The action of the mayor's wife produced an important impression. Perfect stillness ensued. The women were more partial to her side, because Catherine was her husband's ward, and soon they began to abuse the girl roundly.

All the children ran to their mothers for protection from the angry woman, and Christian stood with clenched fist watching Catherine's receding figure. To think that she had gone away without either reproaching him or asking his pardon! And yet fear of his mother prevented his following her. And so he stood, speechless and furious, until her form disappeared behind a house, and the first boat-landing gave a turn to his thoughts. As usual, he was first to render assistance, and while he was thus employed Catherine reached her grandmother's cottage.

Without a word of greeting, she came to the old woman's side. A cool, damp air met the child, as she came from the clear, sunny air into the room, whose only window gave poor light. A few flies hovered around the feeble rays of sunlight that penetrated the small orifices in the shutter. But Frau Klaass no longer seemed to desire either light or air. She sat in the darkest corner of the room

—on the bench by the stove—spinning industriously.

Catherine crossed the floor to the table by the window. On it lay a Bible (whose worn lids proved that it had served many generations), a catechism, a broken-rimmed slate and a half-knit stocking. The girl had secured her knitting, when the old woman asked:

"Did you bring anything?"

"No; nothing."

"Have they come yet?"

"Yes; they have just come.

"Was it a good haul?"

"They had not landed when I left."

"Why did you come away?" was the reproachful question.

"Because the mayor's wife slapped me," was the short, dry response.

"Slapped you?" repeated the old woman, striking the bench beside her with the utterance of the words, and adding angrily: "What for, pray?"

"Because Christian troubled me again, and I knocked him down," answered Catherine calmly.

Neither spoke for a long while again. The grandmother spun the brown wool into firm, small threads on her distaff, and the grandchild knitted row after row on her stocking. There was dead silence save the wh–r–r–r of the wheel and the clicking of the needles against the table and each other.

When it became too dark to see, Frau Klaass placed her wheel in the corner and hobbled to the table, whose drawer always kept the bread. At this moment some one tapped at the window, and Catherine went to see who it was. She recognized Christian's voice, as he said:

"Come out! I have something for you."

Receiving no response, the boy came around to the front door and repeated his message. Still neither woman deigned to make any reply, except that Frau Klaass called out sternly:

"Tell your mother that no decent dog will take food from the man who has beaten him, and we are not your dogs!"

Christian stood irresolute. Presently he said, in a pleading tone of voice:

"Please come out, Catherine, for I have something to tell you."

The girl looked inquiringly at her grandmother, and she said:

"Go, see what he wants."

Outside the boy stood quietly awaiting her. In one hand he held a bunch of fresh haddock, and in the other a plate of salt. Scarcely daring to look at Catherine, he blurted out:

"Mother greets your grandmother, and asks her to receive these, for you haven't had any."

"Take them to her, yourself!" said Catherine coldly, as she took a seat upon a pine-stump nearby.

The boy thought an instant, and then quickly entered the cottage. He soon returned without his gift, and, instead of going home, approached the girl who was eating her bread and, seemingly, oblivious of his proximity. He came quite close and stood silent and still.

"What makes you stay here?" asked Catherine, crossly.

Christian was speechless with embarrassment. After a little, he thrust his hand into his trousers' pocket, drew out a large piece of amber, held it shyly toward her and said:

"See what I found a few weeks ago! Don't you want it?"

"Stolen goods it is!" was the scornful reply. "Don't you know all amber belongs to the crown, and anybody that finds it should give it up?"

"But," said Christian apologetically, "this is brown and ugly, and nobody would give it up."

"I keep nothing that I find," she returned. "Besides, if it is ugly, what do I want with it?"

The boy was utterly powerless to answer this crushing argument. How gladly would he have told her that he was sorry for having struck her, but he could not begin. He was afraid of exciting her resentment afresh by reference to the grievance, and, by way of preparing the way, he stammered:

"Mother sent the fish—because—because she was afraid your grandmother would do me some harm!"

So ridiculous was this assertion that it tended to soothe the girl's feelings.

"If my grandmother had so much power," she said sadly, "we would not live here so poor and needy!"

Then she rose and turned toward the house.

Suddenly she felt her apron seized by her companion, as he ejaculated feelingly:

"Don't hate me, Catherine!"

"It is your own fault," returned Catherine; "you always injure me, and I don't want to see you ever again!"

Once more Christian seized her, but this time by the arm, and cried passionately:

"Oh, don't, don't say so!"

"What do you want now?" said the girl with visible impatience.

"Pray, don't say you never want to see me again! See here! I will give you my *Heckpfennig*,* Catherine. It was my grandfather's and my father's, and you may have it."

But Catherine thrust back the offered gift decisively, and her action restored Christian to his senses. In a tone of mingled resentment and emotion, he said:

"Remember, Catherine, if anybody else gives you anything, I mean to kill him!" and quickly disappeared in the darkness.

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* By superstition supposed to multiply itself.

CHAPTER VI.

From that night it was remarkable how Christian refrained from troubling Catherine, and his conduct was attributed to fear of his mother. When the children laughed at him about this he was vexed, and, not being able to give the true reason for his altered behavior, asserted that he stood in awe of the old witch, Frau Klaass.

Meantime, Catherine led a more peaceful life, because the village children cared for no enterprise which Christian did not lead; and soon an event occurred which entirely separated her from these unpleasant companions.

One morning old Herr Mathes (or Mathes, as he was called), who had for years served as shepherd for the village sheep, was found dead in his bed, and the mayor was at a loss to find a substitute for him. The men and women could not leave their work, and, of the children, some were too wild and others too absentminded to watch the flock. Besides, it was demoralizing to take them from school. The mayor, in desperation, thought of Catherine, and decided to entrust her with the responsibility, at least until somebody else was procured. He knew that he could trust her fidelity, and, in the woods, she could knit as well as at home. He counted on the schoolmaster's approval, because that worthy person owned two of the sheep.

And, lastly, the thought of doing the good work of giving his ward employment gratified him. So he summoned the girl, announced his wish and sent her to fetch the staff and dog from Mathes's house. It was about eight o'clock in the morning when Catherine entered the cottage where lay the dead shepherd. The old man looked very natural lying there on the bed, with his gray hair hanging on his brow and his scrubby beard on his chin and his face no paler than usual. But his eyes were closed and his arms folded, and the girl imagined that he looked more peaceful and contented than in all the years she had known him. Never before had she been alone with a corpse, and it was hard to believe that Mathes was really dead. Just the evening before he had talked with Frau Klaass and given her some fir cones from his pocket. And not many days before that she had met him in the woods, and he had told her the wonderful story of the Sea Spirit, who brings good fortune to the one who sees it by day and bad fortune when seen by night. Moreover, he had made his dog Pinor show off all his clever tricks—that Pinor, about whom he had often said that he would not exchange for carriages and horses, because he made his bread for him, while they would cost money to keep. Was it possible that Mathes was lying there dead so soon? Pinor sat near by looking, first at his master and then at Catherine, made a move as if to spring on the bed, kept still, and hung his ears so dejectedly that the girl transferred her sympathy from the contented dead master to the forlorn, friendless dog.

Catherine felt a delicacy about taking the shepherd's staff from its corner and calling the dog to follow. Such acts seemed like robbery of the dead. Still, the mayor was impatiently awaiting her, and she was obliged to execute his order. Timidly she approached the corpse and softly said:

"Mathes, may I have your staff? I am going to tend the flock. May Pinor go with me?"

The awful silence that greeted the request filled her with nameless terror, so still more earnestly she pleaded:

"Please, Mathes, tell Pinor to go with me. The mayor is waiting."

The dog, hearing his name, wagged his tail, pricked his ears, ran to the open door and seemed to ask Catherine to leave. Thus encouraged, the girl fetched the staff from its place, gave a last glance of wonder and emotion to the corpse, went out of the house and carefully fastened the door behind her.

Pinor took the lead. He seemed to think that it was his business to take care of the young shepherdess as well as the flock. Before every house where there were sheep to be collected he stopped, barked and sprang around Catherine, as if to show her her duty. Armed with good advice and friendly warning from the mayor and others, Catherine set out behind the little flock for the neighboring woods, where pasture was found.

The girl was full of joyous anticipations. It was an August day when the sun blazed down upon the earth, causing the whitish-yellow sands to glitter like metal. Sea and sky shone forth in the same lovely blue tints.

Catherine wore over her head to protect it from the heat an old kerchief; in her apron were knitting, bread and dried fish; on her arm a small bucket of water; in her hand the shepherd's staff. This was her first experience of spending as much as a day out of Heisternest, and she felt as if it was a long journey into a new world.

No longer did she seem a child since she was entrusted with the care of these beautiful sheep, and in her pride for this honor she forgave the villagers their previous wrongs and persecutions.

The flock appeared very different in her eyes today from the many times she had seen them passing to and from pasture. Every one of them excited wonder and curiosity. It was delight to see how dexterously Pinor massed them together when, perchance, some would stray a little, and only the thought that she must walk as slowly and dignifiedly as Mathes prevented her from rendering him assistance.

The distance to the woods was short, and the small procession soon reached its destination. Many a time had the girl been to this grove for fuel, but now it was transformed like the chamber of her grandmother on the ever memorable-Christmas

Eve! As then she stepped from darkness into beautiful light, so to-day she viewed the attractions of the woods for the first time without human companions.

She felt as if enchanted by all around her, for nature presents wonders and secrets at midday as well as at midnight. And who would not be enchanted to find a grove of regular, slender trees on the downs? The trees are not especially tall, and a few capriciously grown like mountain timber, but the trunks stand close together, and, to the girl who had never seen other ones, had all the majesty and witchery of a forest. The pine-trunks, over which arched their leafy canopy, resembled red-hued columns, and well contrasted with the dark-green, needle foliage.

Over the whole ground spread innumerable narrow-leaved bushes, among whose boughs peered the whortleberries like violet jewels. Here and there waved a red pink, a blue Coventry-bell on their slender stems. Large, beautiful ferns and small golden mushrooms clustered at the foot of trees above the grass and stray roots, while heavy moss hung from their branches like small banners. The quiet of nature was broken by the hum of a bee, the flight of a butterfly or the noise of a dragon fly. To complete the witchery, a strong wood-smell filled the air with its fragrance.

A little way beyond the trees is a small elevation, which the village children call a hill, and as Pinor drove the flock toward this, Catherine willingly followed. Often had she seen Mathes sit in this spot, and sometimes joined him when search for fuel, berries or mushrooms led her steps thither. But this place, like all the rest, was changed. Somehow, she felt a dread lest all this beauty would presently disappear like the wonders of the Christmas tree. And she, herself, seemed altered. There was so much to do, that she was bewildered which to first undertake. She wanted to knit, but there was plenty of time for that. She thought of eating her lunch, but she was not hungry. And, besides, with such a wealth of berries around, it was foolish to eat black bread. Eagerly she began to pluck them, but suddenly stopped, because she realized that she was not paying sufficient attention to the sheep. Then she became interested in counting them and watching their individual peculiarities. The large sheep with their patient ways, the lambs with their frolicsome gambols, and even the ram with his dignified air gave her especial joy.

After running around some time with Pinor until she was tired, she sat down. The dog, seeming to understand that he belonged to her, came and laid his head on her lap. Passionately, Catherine seized him round the neck and kissed him, and never since she was a baby in her grandmother's arms had she embraced a being with such fervor.

Then, because she was so happy, the girl determined to do twice as much knitting as commanded, and took out the stocking dutifully. But, somehow, she could keep neither eyes nor attention upon her work.

Pinor—wagging his tail to cool himself, or snapping at the flies or rushing after this or that sheep, which wandered too far for his pleasure—continually distracted her thoughts and looks.

When she saw the larger animal meekly receive the scolding bark of the smaller and obediently do his will, surprise filled her breast, and meditation on the difference between creatures her mind.

Watching the sagacious dog made her think of his master, who had taught him these ways, and, instinctively turning to him, she cried:

"Pinor, where is Mathes?"

A pitiful whine and uneasy running around was the poor dog's answer. He started homeward, returned, made a circle around the flock several times, as if assuring himself of their safety, again took the path to the village, barking as he went, and finally came back slowly, with collapsed ears and tail, and laid himself at Catherine's feet. The girl felt greater pity for him than she did by the master's corpse. She tenderly stroked his head, his yellow ears and long nose. Such caresses soon brought the appreciative Pinor's head into her lap.

"Stay with me, poor fellow," said the girl, "and I will give you something."

As he gratefully licked one hand, she took out her lunch of black bread with the other and fed him with pieces until all was gone.

This act sealed the bond of friendship, and the girl saw good reason why Mathes would not have exchanged the animal for a carriage and horses.

When the hour arrived for returning home, Pinor, of his own accord, collected the sheep, and then, with little assistance from Catherine, led them to water at the village brook and afterward into their respective stalls. Then, turning from the shepherdess, he reached the house where his dead master lay, and planting himself by the closed door, howled most piteously until the neighbors, whose rest he disturbed, drove him off with kicks and lashes.

CHAPTER VII.

Because Catherine had so well performed her duty, the mayor continued to entrust her with the flock. Nothing could have given her more pleasure than to be again in the woods with Pinor and the sheep. Expectation made her rise by daylight, and it seemed a long time ere Pinor summoned her with loud barking to departure. She knew that the mayor would have dinner sent to her grandmother, and she promised herself to make up for time lost on her knitting the previous day. It was the most blissful moment of the girl's life when she reached the woods at an early hour.

The dew on the green moss and the pine-tags trembled and glittered like tiny stars, and the air was fresh and invigorating. But, as the sun's rays grew warmer, the flock pressed further within the belt of woods, which covers two miles of space between the village and the town of Hela.

On the narrowest part of the peninsula the trees almost reach the water, and toward this place Catherine drove the flock. Yesterday she had enjoyed quiet and thought, but to-day she sought diversion and amusement. Of course Pinor furnished her no end of these. His graceful, active pursuit of butterflies excited her emulation, and in following him she soon reached the end of the woods. From the leafy, cool shade of the trees she suddenly came upon the sparkling, sun-lit sand, and the dazzling beach and sea forced her to close her eyes. As she stood thus, bewitched by the novel surroundings, she thought that just so charming must be her father's home far away, and opening her eyes again, lo! a sight met them which sent a tremor of delight through her frame. On the waves of the sea rose a strange, beautiful country adorned with heights, castles and trees such as she had never seen, all of which were mirrored in an expansive lake below. The girl had never heard of such a land nearby, and she stood gazing at it with mingled feelings of awe and wonder.

Remembering that sailors when they see it cry out from the boat, she excitedly placed both hands around her mouth and called at the top of her voice:

"Land! Land! Land!"

But almost before the words died away, the mysterious beautiful country vanished from her eager sight, and the sea smoothed out as usual under the blue arch of heaven. For a few moments Catherine felt as if the peninsula itself was gone, but Pinor's familiar bark in answer to her voice recalled her to reality.

Filled with indescribable longing, she stood in the blazing sun, looking out upon the sea. Presently the distant white lighthouse of Hela struck her vision, and roused serious intentions. She determined to go to the place, mount the lighthouse and look out for the wonderful sight which she had just lost. Perhaps it was the home of her father, about whose beauties her grandmother had often discoursed. And might she dare to tell the old woman what she had to-day enjoyed?

So absorbed was she in these deep thoughts that the sheep were utterly forgotten and Pinor more than once during the day found it next to impossible to elicit his usual caresses.

In the evening when the two separated in the village, she allowed him to leave without a single word of endearment.

As the day was sultry, Catherine found her grandmother sitting on the threshold of the cottage, spinning as usual. She did not inquire how her grandchild had spent the day, for such is not the custom with the indigent, hard-working class, to whom each day is but a copy of its predecessor. She only took the knitting out of her hand, wound up the ball, stuck one needle in it and produced the fellow of the stocking from her pocket. Then she laid the completed one, on which was marked with a needle the expected amount of work, against the other, and compared them with the same degree of care as if life or death depended upon a hair's difference.

"Grandmother," cried the girl, in answer to a gesture of displeasure, "it is very little!"

"Very little," was the severe response, "when you have been sitting down all day."

"Not sitting—"

"Pray, then, what have you been doing?"

"Grandmother," said Catherine, glancing around to assure herself that she was not overheard, "I have seen something!"

The girl's voice expressed a superstitious awe, which immediately took possession of the old woman.

"Seen something?" she repeated. "In the wood?"

"No, on the sea."

"In clear daylight?" was the astonished response.

"In the bright sunlight. I followed Pinor out of the woods, and saw on the water my father's native land, with such lovely castles and mountains and trees. There were so many more houses than here, and I saw them so plainly that I called out: 'Land!' and felt like I could reach it. But before I could move, everything went away."

Frau Klaass made no reply. She knew that what Catherine described was true, for during long years other people had seen the same sight. She remembered distinctly that her mother was acquainted with the son of such a favored mortal. He had seen the enchanted city rise out of the waves—called out land—stepped toward it and found it disappear. Who had not heard of the Sunken City? For centuries it had lain at the bottom of the sea, and only once a century presented its enchanted loveliness to human eye. And, sometimes, when the sea was very still, fishermen had seen its tall trees at the bottom of the deep. How often had her father told her this? Who did not know that the one who saw the beautiful city once a century and neither spoke nor moved would receive from the Sea Spirit —king of the same—a sack of gold with which to pray his soul out of purgatory?

After a while, she asked:

"Was that all?"

"Where?" returned the girl.

"On the sea," said the grandmother, impressively. "Mathes used to say—"

There was no need to finish the sentence, for Catherine understood her meaning, and put in:

"No, he did not come out!"

And though she knew that the Sea Spirit had no power on land, a shiver ran over her and she pressed close to her grandmother's side.

"Was Pinor there?" asked the old woman, as if a sudden light had come to her.

"Yes, he was. He saw it all and, when it was gone, began to bark."

Catherine was, like many others, betrayed into a slight inaccuracy in her narrative by the influence of her grandmother's superstition.

Both were thoroughly terrified, and could not converse longer on the subject. Frau Klaass had entirely forgotten the knitting and measurement. She rose and called her grandchild into the house. Within, they only spoke in whispers of the experience. Catherine was troubled to find the beautiful sight the Sunken City and not her father's home.

Frau Klaass was bewildered by the girl's revelation. Really, before this, she had no more believed Mathes's tales about the Sea Spirit than the idle talk about her power to do her enemies injury. But since her own grandchild had seen such a wonder, why might she not possess the accredited gift? In trying to explain why the girl had been so favored, she thought she remembered that she was born on Sunday—a sign of good luck—and why might not the sickness or trouble of this and that one, which came to mind, be in consequence of offenses to herself?

A wild, fierce joy entered her heart with the thought. How gladly would she revenge herself upon her persecutors now as in the past! To believe that she could, at will, bring misfortune upon them was a cheering, pleasant idea, and she laid herself to rest by her grandchild's side that night in better spirits than she had enjoyed for years. The girl quickly fell into the arms of Morpheus, while the old woman lay restless and excited.

She felt a presentiment that something of grave importance was to occur, and the longer it delayed the more alert she became. The room was entirely dark, except where the moonlight penetrated the diamond-shaped holes in the shutters. To this spot of light she kept her eyes turned. Suddenly a slight noise was heard outside—a noise surely approaching her door, but different from a person's step. Though she listened in fear, she never turned her glance from the shutter. Suddenly her heart seemed to stop beating, as a pair of staring eyes met her own. In spite of her age, she covered her face with her hands and called Catherine excitedly. Seizing the girl's small arm with her knotty hand, she shook her and cried:

"Catherine! Look! Don't you see something?"

Hardly awakened, the frightened girl gasped:

"A long, white arm!" and clung tightly to her grandmother.

Just then a low howl was heard.

Pinor, who had been cruelly beaten from his post at Mathes's door, had come to seek protection from his new mistress.

The dog's voice and Catherine's assertion of the death-arm seemed to calm Frau Klaass. She told the girl to open the door for Pinor, and, when he was comfortably curled up by the bed, composed herself to rest. But presently she rose in the bed, regarded the dog and exclaimed:

"Mathes has sent you Pinor, so that you will not be all alone when I go!"

"Where are you going, grandmother?" cried Catherine, in emotion.

"Mathes has beckoned me away with his hand, and will soon fetch me off," was the quiet response.

Then the girl began to weep so bitterly as to excite the grandmother's sympathy.

Tears fell over her wasted cheeks upon the girl's pretty head. And, contrary to custom, she folded her in her arms, and both fell asleep, worn out with terror and distress.

CHAPTER VIII.

Next day, when the mayor's wife sent Frau Klaass her dinner, she said to the bearer of it:

"Tell her that I don't want any more food. Mathes has called me away."

The girl regarded the old woman in wondering interest, for the belief in death omens is prevalent among the people to this day.

"Did a dog howl in front of your door?" she asked.

"Yes," was the solemn answer.

"We heard it last night, and wondered where it was," said the girl, moving off.

"Wait a minute!" cried Frau Klaass.

"What do you want?" asked the other, to whom the old woman, as a probable victim of death, had become interesting.

For a few minutes Frau Klaass meditated, and then said quickly:

"Tell the mayor to come at once. I must see him."

The girl assented and kept her word, but as the mayor was out fishing, everybody in the village knew about the event ere his return. Before his boat touched the shore the news was communicated, and as soon as possible he went to her.

The old woman was sitting, not in her usual seat on the threshold, but outside under the canopy of heaven.

The mayor approached her and said in surprise:

"I thought you were nearly dead by your summoning me in haste, and here you sit alive and well."

"Because I am going soon I sit here in the warm sun," she answered calmly.

"Why haven't you always done it?" he asked in greater surprise, not comprehending the hidden meaning of her words.

Slowly shaking her head, she replied:

"I never could air myself before somebody else's door. Why show everybody my poverty? But now I will be here so short a time that I don't care."

"Why speak of dying while you are well?" persisted the mayor. "This talk about Mathes is foolishness."

"Laugh if you choose," she returned, "but you will live to see who knows best. But that is not what I want," and now she spoke with deep feeling. "Mayor, what will become of Catherine when I die? Remember you are her guardian."

"She must go into service," replied he, quickly, while he meditated how to best cut short the interview and return to his business.

"Yes, she must go into service," repeated Frau Klaass. "But to whom?"

"We must first find out who wants her. She is not yet fourteen years old, but strong and well-grown for her age," said the mayor, growing more impatient.

For a few moments the old woman was silent. Then she solemnly resumed:

"Mayor, I have complained of no one, nor asked anything but work. Nor have I done anybody harm, though I might have done it, and yet I can't leave Catherine in the village."

By this time her companion was thoroughly annoyed. Pressing engagements awaited him while he was made to stand and listen to the flighty discourse of Frau Klaass. He suddenly determined to bear this no longer, and sharply replied:

"If you want me to do anything, make haste and tell me, for I must go home."

"Yes," she said eagerly, "I do want you to do something. Write to Frau Deik, in Hela, who took my child and treated her well, and ask her if she will not take Catherine in the shop. Tell her she only asks food and clothing for her services, and will serve her well. If only she can get there I will lie down and die peacefully."

This plan struck the mayor as a good one. Catherine had, indeed, shown herself capable of tending the flock, but she could not permanently watch them. Moreover, it would soon be time to send her to receive religious instruction from the pastor of Hela—the nearest Lutheran minister—and to put her in service in the village and then send her miles off day after day would make her help very little in the household. And, lastly, it would be a blessing to rid Heisternest of one more orphan. So he cheerfully promised Frau Klaass to write the letter, and left her grateful.

Next morning the old woman's condition was unchanged, and day followed day without signs of dying. The neighbors were thereby both puzzled and fretted. Most of them had relented in their hatred toward her when they heard that she would soon die, but when time passed on without bringing the expected event, one by one, they began to believe she had only resorted to this subterfuge to extract the desired promise from the mayor. After a little, no one believed that she had seen old Mathes except Catherine and herself. From morning till night she now sat in the sun, declaring that she was chilled away from it. And when any one chided her with false prediction she would solemnly affirm that no mortal ever stayed more than three weeks on earth after being called, and she would soon answer her summons.

Meanwhile, Catherine went regularly to the woods with the sheep and dog, and, as soon as the heat of the day began, repaired to the spot where she had seen the beautiful sea-vision. She could readily have spent hours—nay, days—sitting there, looking over the glancing waves and filled with enchanting hopes. With every change or coloring in the clouds just above the sea-line, imagination pictured the return of the wonderful Sunken City. But the forms and hues of these clouds, peculiarly attractive on the Baltic, ever disappeared as rapidly as the enchanted sight desired had done, and each evening brought disappointment for the day and hope for the morrow. In spite of Frau Klaass's assertion that what she had seen was the Sunken City, which only once in a century rose on the waves, Catherine could not repress the thought that it might be her father's home, and, as she feared to speak to any one of her idea, she became abstracted and dreamy.

One evening just before the time to return home, she discovered that, in consequence of these meditations, she had not quite finished her allotted task on the stocking, and, therefore, set industriously to accomplish it.

Her feelings about her grandmother's death were much relieved since, after the terror of the memorable night, she had neither died nor been sick.

And yet at the bottom of her heart she believed Mathes would return for her grandmother. A pang of distress seized her at the thought that when the dear grandmother was gone she would have no one to set her tasks.

She began to calculate how long a time had passed since she saw the old shepherd laid out on his bed, and found it seventeen days. If Mathes kept his word, in four more days he would take away her grandmother and leave her all alone in the wide world. The thought struck her like a heavy blow. Where would she go at night? With whom would she sleep? In vain she searched her mind for answers.

It was true that she knew of orphans who had been provided for, but, like all people under the weight of first personal sorrow, she did not think of applying their good fate to her own case. She only remembered that the villagers had always disliked and often mistreated her. And the bare idea of failing to go at night to her grandmother—of failing to sleep by her side as she had always done—was agony. All the consolations, all the care of that life-long friend loomed up before her mind. And who else could ever tell her the stories about her mother and her father? Selfishness was the root of all these meditations about her grandmother. She realized fully that from her death great misfortune would follow. Just then Pinor softly placed his head in her lap, as if to comfort her, and she sadly said as she stroked him:

"Ah, you are old, too, Pinor, and will soon leave me."

Suddenly the dog pricked his ears, ran a little way and barked.

Catherine followed his movements with her eye, and saw Christian step out from the woods. The girl had scarcely spoken to him since the evening of the last difficulty between them, and his visit was now unwelcome. He walked to her side, and receiving no salutation, said apologetically:

"I have been to Hela to get yeast, for ours was out and we needed bread."

"Did you go early?" asked the girl.

"About seven, when the children were going to school."

"Do people go to town through the woods?"

"Yes, they can, but it is better to go by water," and adding hastily: "I just came this way to see what you were doing."

Catherine seemed to fail to notice this personality, and continued:

"Did you go up to the top of the lighthouse?"

"Yes, the keeper's son took me up."

"And what did you see?" was the eager question.

"See? Why, nothing!" he answered, surprised.

"Nothing!" she replied in disappointment.

"Nothing but water. Beyond that, to the south, was something dark, which was the mainland. Nothing else!"

Catherine did not reply.

He stood by her side and watched her knitting. Now and then he glanced uneasily toward the sun, which was nearly down. He knew that he ought to go, and yet he could not break away. At last he said desperately:

"Do you love to keep the sheep?"

"Better than staying in the village," she replied, and, simultaneously, glancing up, cried:

"The storks! The storks!"

A long line of these birds were flying overhead, making numerous turns in flight. Both watched them as far as they could be seen.

"The summer is over!" said Christian.

"And everything else," was the sad reply.

The boy could not understand her dejected tone, and queried:

"What is going away?"

"Mathes is gone, and soon my grandmother will follow!" she said oracularly.

"She is not going to die, she only says so!" was the consoling reply.

But his words, instead of having the desired effect, roused Catherine's indignation.

"I tell you she is, for I saw Mathes beckon her away the very night after I saw the beautiful city on the sea."

When Christian smiled incredulously, the girl grew more excited and was beguiled to relate, in the high colors of superstition and repetition, the episode which filled her day and night dreams.

The boy's expression changed from derision to interest, and now understanding why she asked about the lighthouse, he replied, when she stopped out of breath:

"You are going to live in Hela when your grandmother dies?"

"In Hela?" gasped Catherine, as if thunderstruck.

"Yes!" repeated he with importance. "See here, I have in the pocket of my coat a letter!"

With these words, he drew forth from his blue Sunday jacket the missive, proudly showed it to her, and added:

"This is from Frau Deik to my father! And she told me to say that, if you were as good as your mother was, she would take you in the shop!"

Catherine did not reply, but dropped her knitting in her lap and covered her eyes with both hands. Christian, who expected quite a different reception to his news, asked what was the matter, and receiving no reply, repeated his question again and again.

Finally Catherine sobbed out:

"When Mathes—died and—Pinor lay by the door of his house—he was kicked and whipped away!"

"But why should you grieve for that, Catherine?" interrupted the boy.

"Because they drive me away like a dog!" was the passionate response as she buried her face on her knees and sobbed aloud.

The dog, hearing his name called, came up and thrust his nose lovingly against her face. Catherine impulsively returned his caress, and Christian, observing it, said consolingly:

"You can take him to town with you. And in the fall I will see you every week, for I have to go to the pastor for instruction."

But the girl did not seem to appreciate this alleviation of her woe. She wiped her eyes, rolled up her knitting, and prepared to go home. Pinor, with usual sagacity, collected the sheep and drove them forward. The children followed, but in silence. Just before the village was reached Catherine suddenly asked:

"Where will the storks sleep to-night?"

"Far south of Dantzig, I suppose," he answered.

"When I go I would like to get as far away."

"I, too!" exclaimed Christian, with interest. "And when I go to sea, Catherine, I will take you far away." He paused, expecting her to ask what she would see there, but as she showed no curiosity, he added shyly: "Catherine, if I get to be a pilot, I will return and marry you."

"By that time I will be far off," was the unmoved reply. Not another word was spoken by either, and when they reached the mayor's door they separated without saying good-night.

On reaching home, Catherine found her grandmother in bed and her food untouched on the table. She did not complain of anything but chilliness, and directed the girl to eat the food which her taste rejected. While Catherine was enjoying it with the zest of youth and health, the mayor appeared, and manifested great surprise to find things as they were. In answer to his questions the old woman dryly replied :

" One who don't work should not eat. Besides, it is sinful to fatten the dying for the worms. But Catherine has long to live, and needs food."

The mayor, although remarkably free from superstition and death omens, felt a chill run over his body as she spoke. It gave him both surprise and aversion to hear the old creature, who knew no more of the hour of death than other mortals, speak of the terrible event with such perfect coolness. So he shortly replied :

" Frau Klaass, you commit sin to refuse to eat in this way. God alone knows your death hour, and you have no right to starve yourself."

" I have been called," was the undaunted reply, " and therefore I go!" After a little pause she cried earnestly. " Have you gotten an answer to your letter?"

" Yes, and that 's why I came to see you." Frau Klaass strove to conceal her joy, as the mayor continued : " Frau Deik will take Catherine in the shop if she is like her mother. Christian has just given me her letter."

Before leaving, the kind-hearted man tried to induce her to eat something and have some medicine. Finding his eloquence useless, he at last became provoked and exclaimed sharply:

"You are the cause of your own trouble, and if you will not eat then you will kill yourself!"

The old woman scornfully replied:

"You cannot cheat death with food. Just let me alone."

The mayor closed the door behind him with more than usual force and wended homeward.

No sooner was he gone than Frau Klaass called Catherine to the bed, and said:

"When I am dead and buried you will go to live with Frau Deik in Hela."

"Yes," assented the girl.

"Did you know it before?"

"Christian told me about it."

"Your mother did well with Frau Deik, and so will you, if you do your duty."

"Yes," repeated the girl, as she seated herself by the bedside. Then ensued a long silence. Catherine knew not whether her grandmother was awake or asleep, and she dared not go to bed as usual. Fain would she have relieved her burdened heart by weeping, but the tears refused to flow. At last she fell asleep in the chair and rested quietly until Pinor's restless movements near by caused her to open her eyes and observe that the day had dawned. Turning to the bed, her startled glance met the figure of her grandmother sitting up in bed and loosing the precious bag of jewels from her neck.

"Open the shutter and come here!" she cried to the half-awakened girl.

Catherine quickly obeyed. When she turned from the window, the old woman was extricating with feeble fingers the large earrings and motioned to the girl to fasten them in her ears. Then, with her own hands, she clasped the coral necklace in its place.

Catherine had often looked forward to this hour with exultation, but the circumstances were so alarming that she recoiled involuntarily, and gasped:

"No! I don't—want them, grandmother!"

"But you must," was the stern reply, "for they are your mother's legacy to you, which I have kept all these years. Now, you must wear them when you walk behind my coffin and ever afterward, so that everybody will know you are better than the others, and your father's people will recognize you when they come for you, for come they will. Mathes has just told me so."

"Mathes!" repeated the girl, in terror. "Mathes here!"

"Did you not see how glad Pinor was?" was the solemn answer.

And just then the dog rose and went toward the door, but Catherine dared not look toward him. She kept her eyes upon the old woman staring straight at the open window.

Wild with horror and despair, she presently rushed out of the house to summon help. A few steps from the door she met a woman carrying a water-bucket, and, seizing her arm, tried to draw her toward the cottage. But the terrified countenance and speechless haste plainly showing the neighbor Catherine's meaning, the superstitious creature freed herself and ran for other assistance. When the hopeless girl reëntered the cottage she found her grandmother unmoved, except that her breath was more difficult.

In possession of her senses still, the dying one drew the girl to her and stroked her head, and Catherine, scarcely knowing what she did, placed the left arm, already stiffening in death, around her young neck. Thus passed a few dreadful moments. Suddenly the door was thrown open, and the old woman crying: "Mathes! Mathes! He throttles me!" fell back, dead, on her pillow.

The neighbor and her husband came just in time to close the eyes of the deceased, but it was currently reported in the village that they were permitted to see Mathes carry away Frau Klaass just as she had predicted three weeks before.

In a few hours the cottage was thronged with visitors. Some wanted to see if Frau Klaass looked different from other dead people, and others wanted to hear what the mayor would say about Catherine's jewels. Many confidently believed that other treasures than these were hid in the cottage and, disregarding the girl's solemn assertion that the grandmother had, with her dying hands, given her these—the only legacy of her mother—proceeded to search every nook and cranny of the house. Some went so far as to look up the chimney and remove the hearthstones, and, possibly, would have searched the bed where the corpse lay, but for the arrival of the mayor. This officer was very much provoked by their lawless conduct and indignantly refused to take the ornaments from Catherine.

To vent the natural spleen which this treatment of their action evoked, the villagers turned upon the poor girl and reported that she had stolen the jewels from the dying woman. And to confirm this idea, Catherine appeared behind Frau Klaass's bier adorned with the fateful treasures.

Then everybody knew that she was made out of the same material as her grandmother, and nobody could expect proper conduct from people of low Polish blood!

But, beneath all this, there was universal relief, both from the death of Frau Klaass and the removal of Catherine from the village.

CHAPTER IX.

To Catherine Carvallos, who had never been farther from her home than the woods, the two miles' journey to Hela seemed unending. It was about daybreak of an autumn day when she, in company with the mayor and two other men who had business in town, set out for Hela. None of her companions troubled themselves to speak to her during the walk, nor to apprise her, when they sighted a settlement, that she was approaching her future home. But she was too full of surprise and admiration to miss the attention. The seventy or eighty small buildings which lined the street on either side impressed her ignorant mind as almost as beautiful as the wonderful city of the sea. The bell-tower in the middle of the street, the ancient church with its history, the glancing white lighthouse, were all objects to efface from memory weariness from the long walk, and even the death of her grandmother. Presently the mayor paused before a house and said:

"You go here."

Catherine turned with interest toward her future home. The building was one-storied like the rest, but had three windows on each side of the door, and green wooden benches beneath them. The exterior was weather-boarded and painted a grayish color, which contrasted well with the white shutters of the windows. Over the door was a large signboard, on which was painted in large letters the name "Deik," and the door itself bore a brass knocker which shone brightly in the sun. To the unsophisticated girl the dwelling seemed a palace.

On the bench at the right of the door sat the owner of the shop—Frau Deik. Although nearly sixty years old, no one would have taken her for it with her well-preserved color, teeth and hair. In spite of her being rich—owner of a shop and garden and a thousand *thalers* laid away—she wore the usual costume of narrow skirt and jerkin of coarse, printed linen. But so neatly did it fit, and so nicely was it laundered, that her figure was well set off thereby. Above all she had a large black bombazine apron tied around her waist. In the belt of this was stuck a bunch of keys. These belonged to the shop and household, and ever since her husband's death she carried them on her person.

Her whole appearance indicated neatness and order. She was also a prudent person, and not eager for chatter, as in her business she had learned it was better to give the last than the first word. So she allowed the mayor to bid her good-day before she cast upon him a kindly glance from under her white cap-ruffles and asked:

"Where from, and whither are you going?"

"From home, of course, Frau Deik," said he, surprised, "and I bring Catherine to you."

"Well, sit down and rest," was the unmoved reply. Then she watched the parting between the mayor and his friends, and ignored the girl's presence. But when they were alone she gave Catherine a searching glance from head to foot, and dryly said:

"This is the girl! At the same age her mother was better-looking. Pray, where did she get her big earrings?"

The mayor hastened to relate their history, and Frau Deik listened quietly. Meantime, Catherine stood by the bench, irresolute and embarrassed, and heard herself discussed. But when her guardian related how her grandmother was superstitious and foretold her death, and how Frau Deik was doing a good deed to take the orphan whom no one in Heisternest would have, the woman turned kindly toward her and said:

"You have heard all, Catherine. Here you shall stay, where there are no ghosts nor Spanish Knights.* Now go inside and rest." With this she took out the large key and opened the house-door. "When I need you, I will call."

Catherine willingly obeyed, but she could not rest. On the left of the door stood the shop counter, and behind it many shelves, laden with cotton cloth and linen and colored knitting-yarn. Besides, there were drawers of groceries and other provisions, the names of whose contents were neatly labeled thereon, flasks of brandy and glasses of yellow liquors arranged before the windows, barrels and tubs and casks under the counter—in a word, enough to interest her for hours.

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*A name in Hela for rope-dancers and circus-riders.

Although tired and sleepy, her mind was also busy with such queries as, "What will she order? What will I do? What will she do to me?"

Instinctively fearing that some one might rob her of her precious jewels, she took them off, unfastened her small bundle of clothing, drew out the little bag, placed them in it and hung it round her neck just as her grandmother had done. When her neckerchief was readjusted, she folded her hands over the bundle in her lap, leaned her head on the counter and fell asleep.

Not more than half an hour had thus elapsed, when a loud, sharp series of sounds awakened her. Raising her startled glance, she realized that the clock was striking twelve and Frau Deik approaching her.

"Come to dinner," she said, and noticing the absence of the conspicuous ornaments as the girl rose, added: "Where are your earrings?"

"In a bag round my neck," answered Catherine.

To this Frau Deik made no reply, but led the way into the adjoining room.

At the dinner-table sat a young man—the nephew of Frau Deik—whom she had adopted because she had no children. When he saw Catherine he laughed rudely, and exclaimed:

"God preserve us! Why she looks exactly like old Hirschel's Chaie!"

Frau Deik did not reprove this impoliteness, and Catherine had to bear it. But try as she would, she could not eat the good, nourishing food—the best she had ever seen. At that moment she longed for her dry bread in the lonely woods. It was bad enough to have to eat before a strange man, but that he should call her like the daughter of the old peddling Jew, who was the scorn and contempt of every one on the peninsula, took away all appetite and choked her with emotion. How gladly would she have pushed away her plate and left the room! But fear of her mistress detained her, and she gradually managed to eat a little. The dignified commanding manners of Frau Deik had gained her immediate respect and obedience.

During the meal the young man informed his aunt that, as a breeze had sprung up, he, with others, would sail over to Dantzig, and he would attend to any business she might have.

Then they discussed shopkeepers and streets and the public-houses of Dantzig as things well-known, but Catherine had never before heard of so many strange names.

When the dinner was finished, the nephew drew out a large silver watch and said abruptly:

"It is time that I was going. Girl, hand my coat off the nail behind the door!"

Catherine tried, but could not reach the desired object. Her failure exasperated the man and, as he rose to procure it himself, he cried angrily:

"The wench is too little for use!"

Moved by scorn and fright, Catherine, for the first time, cast a glance toward him. A well-developed figure, blue eyes and curly flaxen hair made him a handsome man in his own as well as others' estimation. He was dressed well. His linen was dazzlingly white, his trousers of fine blue cloth and his coat adorned with large buttons. Frau Deik, even, was proud of his good appearance, though she sought diligently to conceal the fact.

While he was preparing for the voyage, and his aunt was counting the money required for the purchases, poor Catherine stood by and looked on. Suddenly he turned upon her and asked:

"What are you waiting for?"

"I don't know what to do!" returned Catherine, with resentment in her glance.

"Well, you sha' n't stand there staring at me!" was the insulting retort.

Here Frau Deik interfered by telling the girl to remove the dishes to the kitchen and wash them nicely.

Gratefully, Catherine obeyed. It was indescribable relief to get away from Karl Deik, in whose presence every moment of time was marked by insult and unkindness.

When night came and the lamp was lit, Frau Deik called the girl to her side. She was sitting by a table, on which lay a Bible and a day-book. She opened the Bible and told her to read. The parts selected were the parables of the ten virgins and of the entrusted pounds. After she had read them carefully through, the old woman took the Bible out of her hand, placed a mark between the leaves, laid it down, and pointing to an entry on the left of the day-book, said:

"What's that?"

Catherine had to look closely to decipher the bad writing, but answered:

"Herr Kleinstüber—one *gulden*."

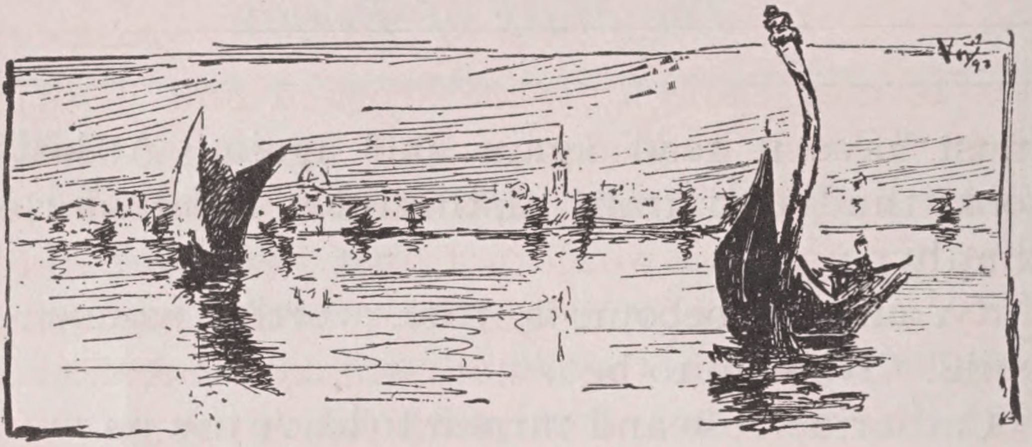
Then Frau Deik handed her a piece of paper and told her to copy the item from the book. When finished she took the sheet, scrutinized it long, compared it with the original and said:

"That's well done, and I will keep you. But if you are useful in the house, you must not be high-minded. And you must not wear around here ear-rings and chains, for you are almost as black as night, and the children will ridicule you! Only be industrious and obedient, and you will do well. After new year my nephew Karl is going to Berlin to enlist in the guards for three years. Then I will need some one to read and write for me, as my eyes are no longer good. You can do both for me, and if you are faithful I will treat you as well as your mother before you. But mind, don't let me hear of foolish stories about ghosts. Be thankful that you have a good roof over your head, good clothes for your body, good food for your stomach. Very soon I will send you to the pastor for religious instruction, so read me that chapter of the Bible once more."

Again she handed her the Bible and listened with deepest interest to the same parables. When this verse was reached, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many. Enter, thou, into the joys of thy Lord!" the old woman must have it read again and again. At last she took the book from Catherine's hand and said kindly :

"You will become a true, worthy woman, my child. Now go to bed."

Catherine rose and turned to leave the room ; but her mistress directed her to a small bed near her own, which she had prepared for her, and long before Frau Deik lay down, the weary girl was peacefully sleeping.



CHAPTER X.

Three months later than this time, so sensibly had Catherine's appearance changed that one would scarcely have recognized her as the same person.

She had become not only the prettiest girl in Hela, but hardly could a prettier one be found in the country. She was tall and well developed, her dark, large eyes possessed a sweet expression, her full, red lips and pretty teeth indicated robust health, and her rich, wavy hair was scarcely concealed by the kerchief which, according to the fashion for servants, she wore over the little white cap denominated *Hülle*.

But still more thorough was the change in her feelings and ideas.

The sudden change from the superstitious ignorance of her grandmother to the wisdom and virtue of a kind mistress, from the idle, dreamy loneliness to prescribed, regular work and proper intercourse with other people had, first, produced a kind of anxious fear in the girl's mind. At one blow all of her former thoughts were scorned and displaced. Frau Klaass had always told her that she was pretty and distinguished, while Frau Deik declared that her ugliness would not hurt her if she did her duty, and thereby might she avoid becoming a beggar. Within the small, smoke-blackened cottage she had heard of beautiful things in distant lands, but here, in the fine house, she was told of this and that labor which she must perform at different hours of each day, so that night always found her worn out and ready to sleep. In the village, young and old disliked and annoyed her; in the town, no one troubled her, for she gave no one cause for ill-will.

And thus the first weeks were filled with alternate hopes and disappointments, chagrin and satisfaction, fancies and realities. But when the new year came and Karl went to Berlin, as his aunt had informed her that he would, Catherine breathed more freely, and entered with more zest upon her duties. Very soon she became so used to this life that she almost forgot that she had ever lived differently, and the days succeeded each other with a peaceful monotony which rendered them undistinguishable, one from another.

She had little to do with the cultivation of the garden, for Frau Deik employed a neighbor to attend it. But she must always be near her mistress in the house or shop, to serve customers, to write credits (Frau Deik could not write, though she did not tell it) or to do anything necessary. While the old woman was not a scribe, she was an excellent judge of human nature, and from the countenances and talk of customers learned as much of their inner lives as she knew of her own. And she was so good and kind a person that the pastor often sent the needy to her for advice or assistance. The pastor of the church was a young man lately come to Hela, and did not fail to observe Frau Deik's good qualities. He commended her for her charity in taking the orphan from such an atmosphere of superstition and ignorance, and encouraged her to bring her under his religious instruction and hope for the speedy eradication of her wrong ideas.

It was a sin for a so-called Protestant community in the nineteenth century to commit the injustice exhibited toward the child's grandmother by the inhabitants of Dantzig Heisternest.

But it was Frau Deik's privilege to show them that she could, by proper religious and secular influences, destroy the unhappy belief of the child in witchcraft and ghosts and make her a sensible, good woman.

This advice was in beautiful consonance with the good woman's views. It pleased her greatly to have confidences with the new pastor—the most learned man that had ever occupied the position and with distinguished relations in Dantzig. She knew that he had held her up as model to the other Helans for taking the poor orphan, whom nobody else would have, and she could not resist the temptation of referring to the fact with pride. But, at the bottom of her heart, Frau Deik felt that in Catherine she had found a treasure. No sooner had the girl recovered from her natural fear of the new surroundings, than she displayed the same aptness and skill of her mother, and surpassed her in the ability to read and write for her mistress, who, laying her own failure on poor eyesight, took this extra service calmly, because of or rather as reward for her striking condescension to the unfortunate one.

The pastor being a really godly man, on whose heart the people's souls' interest weighed, soon comprehended poor Catherine's case, and took especial interest in instructing her. Realizing that a person's nature is unchangeable, and the first impressions in life most lasting and difficult to efface, he yet believed that the errors of such an one may, by right means, be turned to good. To this end, he labored with Catherine. He did not tell her to renounce the thought that her father and mother were great people, but he explained that her father was a brave, good soldier, and her mother an honorable, worthy *bürgerfrau* in Dantzig, and of them she should be proud. He advised her not to dwell on the imaginations of her sick grandmother, but to consider how she could nobly do her work. She had no right to think herself better than others unless her actions were better, and if ever any one taunted her with the foolish stories of her grandmother, she should answer them by exhibiting a worthy demeanor. He was sorry to tell her that she could never get help from her father's relations nor, indeed, from anybody else, but if ever she left Frau Deik, she could easily find on the mainland a position as honorable maid, wherein she would experience more contentment than being a dependent upon anybody.

Such wise and judicious teachings will affect young people of greatest obstinacy and willfulness, and they soon showed their impress upon Catherine. The more she thought about the pastor's words, the more plainly she saw their truth, and she promised herself to try to follow his reasonable advice. And, at the age of fifteen, when she came with all the other Lutheran children to confirmation, she felt strengthened to vow, with the help of God, to live a life which would stand the criticism of the little world in which her lot was cast.

This event occurred one year after Catherine came to Hela, and in that time her appearance was much altered. Kind Frau Deik had given her a nice costume for the occasion, and when she saw how well it became her shapely figure her pleasure was undisguised. As she watched the distinguished form of the orphan move among the Helans to the altar, her thoughts flew back to the child's mother, who had partaken of first communion in the same spot, and there pledged her troth to the pilot. A new tenderness came into her heart for the poor waif whom, as the pastor said, Providence had rescued from superstitious ignorance and committed to her charge for proper guidance, and for whose soul she must give an account at the judgment bar. When such solemn responsibility was laid upon her, Frau Deik did not weep, like more tender-hearted women, but silently resolved to fulfill her duty in the case. But beside the value of Catherine's services before mentioned, there was another reason why this duty was not onerous, which might be sinful, and, therefore, better not mentioned. Like many old women who have in youth been attractive, she took continual delight in Catherine's beauty. She loved to see her, on rising from bed, comb her long black hair with strong, shapely hands, bathe her countenance, reddened by fresh water and health, or fasten on her slender body the jerkin, shrunk from many washings. But the pride of Frau Deik was complete when, on confirmation day, her womanly form rose decidedly above all companions of her own age.

No sooner was the solemn rite of the Lutheran creed finished than Catherine returned to her benefactress and kissed her hands. Frau Deik was kindly replying, " Do your du—" when she met in the aisle the mayor, who interrupted her with :

" Good-day !"

" How are you ?" was the hearty response from the old woman, in recognition of his former relation to Catherine.

" Well, my wife and I brought Christian to be confirmed to-day. And here they are."

Sure enough, at the church-door stood the mother and son, and Frau Deik, after shaking hands with them, said :

" You must all come home with me and take a lunch. I know you must need something to fit you for the long walk home, and besides, I want you to see how Catherine is fixed."

Neither the mayor nor his wife had inclination to decline so flattering an invitation, and the little company walked slowly toward the shop, Catherine and Christian taking the lead. The boy was full of importance. He had enlisted on a vessel now lying in Dantzig harbor and about to sail, and in one week's time would leave his native land perhaps forever. In consideration of this connection, he to-day wore the round sailor's hat adorned with two fluttering streamers. His trousers and jacket of nice blue cloth were new, and the latter glistened with many bright buttons. Leather boots and gloves, a black cravat; yellow silk pocket-handkerchief and a nosegay made striking additions to his toilet. But to crown all, he wore a large silver watch, a valuable heirloom which his mother had just consigned to him as parting gift.

During the long journey from the village Christian had been thinking what an impression his costume would make in the town.

But when he saw Catherine enter the church, sit behind him and never once turn her eyes that way, he was too vexed to hear much of the sermon.

He made many plans by which he might attract her attention after dismissal, and was, therefore, surprised and confused when Frau Deik smoothed all obstacles by inviting them to lunch.

Every week during the year the boy had seen and conversed with the girl freely, but now a spell seemed to be put upon his tongue. That he should be walking by her side—he in his Sunday dress, she in hers—he with his nosegay, she with her bunch of geraniums and daisies—she with her mother's worn hymn-book, he with a similar one—bereft him of speech.

The sun shone so warm, the pastor's garden by the sea was so green, the waves were so blue, and everything was so beautiful and attractive that he suddenly felt that he could not tear himself from home. And what if he never should see the island, his parents or Catherine again? All pride and good spirits deserted him. Instead of these came thoughts of shipwrecks, and especially of the Dutch vessel which, two years before, ran aground in the night and all the crew were lost in sight of land. He thought how, if his vessel went down that way, next morning some one would find the sailor hat which he now wore so proudly. Then he took off the hat, examined it well and concluded the finder would be fortunate.

It was his first realization of the truth and terror of death, and burdened his heart with mighty sorrow.

So the house of Frau Deik was reached without the interchange of words between the two overgrown children. The shop was closed in honor of the holy day.

When the hostess opened the door for her guests, everything was spotlessly clean. The sand which Catherine had strewn on the floor was untrodden, the pine boughs on the tables were refreshingly green, the brass vessels shone like gold, and the curtain that hung before the glass of the door connecting the shop with the room beyond as white as the driven snow. As often as they had been in the shop, not one of the guests had ever entered this back room, and were delighted to find it so elegant. The walls were painted green, and the furniture consisted (besides a sofa, chairs and cupboard) of a folding dining-table, covered with a red-flowered linen cloth. The mayor's wife was overcome with surprise and admiration, but prudently and modestly sat by her husband near the door, while Christian awkwardly stood on the threshold. But Frau Deik was too busy to notice the impression made by her household effects. With one of the keys belonging to the large bunch, she opened the cupboard, brought out her English cups, adorned with red trees and yellow birds, and directed Catherine to make the coffee, while she unwrapped her silver spoons and cut the white bread. During these actions, her tongue was not idle:

"Yes, mayor, I am glad that you wrote the letter for Mrs. Klaass," she went on, "as, by the help of God, I trust to make Catherine a good woman. I try to treat her kindly, and have already given her new underclothing and two dresses, one for every day and the other for Sunday. I only needed to talk reasonably with the girl to make her give up her foolish notions, and I have nothing against her now. I know what the pastor says is true, that if you halloo in the woods you 'll get answered. A just mistress makes a good servant always. And," this she said significantly, "my belief is that if the girl and her grandmother had been treated right by some people, there would not have been so much cause to complain of them."

The guests listened politely to this long speech, but each had a private opinion on the subject. But the mayor, realizing that he should respond, said:

"All that may well be, Frau Deik. I have always been provoked by this superstition in the village, and tried to suppress it. I never failed to declare that Frau Klaass was a poor old woman, unworthy of noticing, but—you have not seen the end yet with Catherine, and there is—bad blood in her!"

Frau Deik shook her head decisively, and replied

"There is nothing in blood which honorable work will not take out. If Catherine so judges, other people should believe it!"

Now the mayor was as loath to argue with Frau Deik as the pastor in his pulpit, for both of them could quickly conquer him. Besides, he was delighted to hear that Catherine was satisfactory to so good a mistress. But his wife, who had been longing for an opportunity to show her loquacious powers, turned her chair around and said:

"I know that Frau Klaass was not so bad as she was represented. The trouble began when the officer's Catherine brought home the earrings and necklace, which were, doubtless, stolen goods. Let them be removed and all would be different, I always said so, and I see that Frau Deik agrees with me, because she has taken them from the girl!"

"Not at all! Not at all!" replied that person indignantly. "You are entirely mistaken! Catherine took them off of her own free will, before she had been here an hour. But now I intend her to wear—"

Just here the door opened and the girl entered, bearing the black-painted coffee-tray, on which were placed the coffee-pot and cream pitcher. All traces of the wild, undisciplined creature were gone, and she was a perfect model of an accomplished servant. After depositing her burden, she turned to leave the room, but Frau Deik detained her with a gesture. Very cordially did the hostess call the mayor and his wife to the table, but took care not to seat them on the sofa by herself. When they had eaten with zest of the tempting meal, she called Christian and, afterward, Catherine to refresh themselves. But Christian had no relish for the food. A great lump seemed to obstruct his throat. Ever and anon loomed up visions of a future shipwreck and his own death, and, as he looked at Catherine, he wanted to ask what she would do if his hat was picked up on the shore like the poor sailor's he had once seen. Suddenly a sharp noise was heard, which startled him from his sad reverie. It was the knocker of the shop-door, which was purposely made loud so as to be heard all over the house. Frau Deik said: "Catherine!" and, immediately, the girl left the room to wait on the customer. It was almost incredible to the boy that he saw the same person whom he had known in Heisternest. He longed for her to reënter the room. He determined to tell her about old Pinor, but, when she did return, all self-possession forsook him, for Frau Deik fastened her searching eyes on him, and said sharply:

"Do you want anything? I think your parents should scold you for not speaking a word to anybody, such a big fellow as you are!" But even this reproof only evoked a shake of the head.

As the repast was now finished, the hostess rose from the table, followed by the mayor and wife. As it was then growing late, the man took his hat, the woman fastened her large kerchief over her head and prepared to say good-by.

But on the threshold, Frau Deik called them back, placed Catherine before them and said:

"You think that Catherine has improved because of the removal of her jewels. I *know* that there is no possible influence they can have, and to prove it to everybody, I shall make her, from this day, wear them before all the world!"

A gleam of indescribable joy flew over the girl's face. She reddened from her chin to the roots of her hair, looked inquiringly at her mistress and laid her hand upon the little bag.

"Take them out and put them on," said Frau Deik, triumphantly.

Catherine obeyed her in trembling haste. Conflicting emotions of embarrassment, pride and joy ruled her breast. When she had adjusted them in their places she drew herself up proudly, though she dared not lift her eyes to the spectators. The mistress regarded her with favor and pleasure.

"Wear them," she repeated, "because you have done your duty. But if you ever fail in it so you must give them up! Now you may clear the table."

When Catherine left the room, Christian began to cry most distressingly, and would not answer why he was moved. It was not until his mother scolded, his father threatened and Frau Deik shamed him that he blurted out:

"I am going to get drowned! And—she can wear the big earrings always."

At first the listeners did not comprehend his meaning, but his mother presently said, looking hard at Frau Deik:

"I always said something was wrong about her, but nobody thinks country people know anything. Believe me, as wise as you think yourself you will find out we did not live with her fourteen years for nothing. As to my boy, she has been bringing trouble on him ever since she was born."

Meanwhile the mother pulled his yellow handkerchief out of the breast-pocket of his coat, and proceeded to wipe away the youth's tears as if he were a baby. Catherine did not return, the guests did not ask after her, and Frau Deik was sorry that she had been so gracious. After the door closed behind their retreating forms, the good woman made a vow to carry out her wish with the girl. And what pleasure it would give her to show these prejudiced people that they had no more cause for speaking ill of her than of a sparrow on the roof.

CHAPTER XI.

A few days later, when Frau Deik went to pay the confirmation fee for the poor orphan, which it was her pleasure to give, she could not resist telling the pastor of her interview with the mayor's family. The excellent man listened attentively to her representation, and when his wife entered repeated it to her.

"You see," he added, "good sense and example can alone avail against such things, and, wife, you and I must help this good Frau Deik in her work. I think you acted discreetly, madam, in giving the girl her treasures to wear, for thereby they will lose their mystery for herself and others. And we can turn them to good account by telling her they are types of the adornment of the soul, for which she must strive. We will all watch over the young creature, and if you see anything displeasing, Frau Deik, let us know it, so that we may try to remedy the matter. The care of this soul is a precious privilege to us all."

Frau Deik went home from this confidential interview well pleased with everybody, and especially with the cause of the consultation. She had never had a daughter of her own, and the gratitude and attractions of the orphan won more and more upon her heart. She sometimes felt tempted to adopt the girl, and treated her less like a servant. Whatever work she could, she spared her.

Catherine was by this time most accomplished in her vocation. Besides other things, she had learned to be a fine seamstress, and surpassed her teacher in beautiful work. Active in serving in the shop, kindly in intercourse with others, ready to do a neighbor a service, the pretty Catherine became as the right hand of her mistress, and brought many a customer who would, without her, never or seldom have entered the shop.

After awhile certain persons were frequently there without business, and two men were never wanting. One was Wilhelm, the son of the *Bürgermeister* Hoffman, and the other Gotthard, the lighthouse-keeper's son. Both of them had served terms as soldiers, and both were old enough to marry.

Wilhelm, as son of the most important Helan, had a share in the great net, and everybody thought he would inherit one of the houses opposite Frau Deik's, belonging to his father. This house was at present used as store-house for the government commissary, but it had a pretty garden attached, and many a *Bürger* girl, in passing by it, would look in the window and think what a desirable residence it would make.

Gotthard, on the contrary, had no property, for the Meinarts were not Helan *Bürgers*. The father had been appointed to the care of the lighthouse when the old beacon was removed in favor of the new tower, and for years it had been thought in the town that Gotthard would succeed his father in office.

Catherine would have been both blind and deaf if she had failed to see why the young men frequented the shop.

But, meantime, Frau Deik was using the same senses and constantly warning the girl to think nothing of their favor.

"What matters it," she would say, "if both of them like you, you can never marry either. No *Bürger's* son can marry a woman who is not his equal. Besides, even if Wilhelm would do it, neither his father nor I would allow such a thing. And how can Gotthard, who is a stranger and has nothing, think of marrying? He ought to try to get a woman who will bring him something. Remember that you are a servant, too. Besides, people would quickly speak against your character, and when that is gone all is lost to you."

Catherine took these words to heart, and behaved most discreetly. But her shyness only increased the lovers' zeal. If, at first, they had no settled purpose in the matter, the girl's reserve inflamed their passion and urged them on.

After a little, Wilhelm became so infatuated with her that he forgot his father's wishes and all other obstacles and determined to marry her. He never thought that the girl would need other inducement to say yes than to look across the street and see her future home. And Gotthard, in a milder way, was no less bent on making her his wife. Wilhelm, observing the consideration shown his beloved by Frau Deik, counted on a good dowry from her, although Catherine was neither relative nor *Bürger* girl.

Meantime, Gotthard was consoling himself with the sensible thought that the *Bürgermeister*—although a fisherman like the rest—would never permit his son to marry Frau Deik's servant! Thus fed with deceitful hopes, the lovers were sure of success, and Frau Deik, nourished with common sense, felt equally certain of Catherine's rejection of both.

And thus the time flew pleasantly for the girl, whose good conduct was the constant pride of her kind mistress. And thus months changed into years, until, one beautiful spring morning, the post brought Frau Deik a large letter. There was a heavy postage to pay, which the old woman gave readily, because the missive was from her nephew Karl, in Berlin. As she had not heard a word from him for a long time, she called Catherine at once to read the letter to her, which ran thus:

"DEAR AUNT:

"I now write to you because, in August next, my time runs out. I have passed three years pleasantly enough. I have seen the great city, and enjoyed civilities from both soldiers and private citizens. For these reasons I would like to stay here, especially as it is honorable to wear the king's uniform; but, as I think I will have to stay so long as that I may find you gone when I come back, I have handed in my resignation, and will soon be discharged. So, dear aunt, if you will send me some travelling money, I will soon be with you again.

"Your affectionate nephew,
"KARL DEIK.
"Grenadier in the Imperial Infantry at Berlin."

Frau Deik was never hasty to express her feelings. She, silently, took the letter from the girl's hands, and spread it out before her on the table. But Catherine thought her mistress was displeased with the tone of the letter, and, indeed, she was.

Three years work many changes, and in that time Frau Deik felt a decided coolness in her affection for Karl. She had grown to believe from not hearing from him that he would remain in the army, and she had long ceased to miss him in the household. The best of mortals are soon, if not forgotten in absence, provided with proper substitutes. But Karl had never been a very efficient help or pleasant companion. As heir-apparent to his uncle, he was obliged to assist in the fish-haul, but he never did an extra stroke of work, and sat much of his time in the shop, smoking a pipe and talking with the neighbors.

The little writing he had done for his aunt was better and more quickly done by Catherine, and she was far more trustworthy with cash. So for every reason the old woman was displeased at the thought of her nephew's return.

So far she had carried out her purpose of keeping the orphan and leading her to noble womanhood. But it would not be desirable to have a man like Karl—now twenty-four years old—in the house, who, like most men of dictatorial nature, would certainly interfere with the present management of the girl. And above all, the healthy woman was offended at her nephew's cheerful reference to her death.

That evening, when the coffee was boiling, and Frau Deik was cutting slices of bread for herself and Catherine, she regarded the loaf as if she had never seen it before, and said: "One more to feed!" when she replaced it in the cupboard. And just before going to sleep she asked Catherine how long it would be before August.

Quickly passed the intervening two months ere the expected person arrived. Next day every one in the town knew of Karl's return, and two young men were not glad to see him.

By this time it was universally remarked that Wilhelm spent most of his time in the shop, where he could see the beautiful Catherine. Frau Deik was more keenly impressed with this disagreeable fact than anybody else, but she could not forbid the *Bürgermeister's* son to enter a public place, and contented herself with seeing to the discreetness of Catherine's conduct toward him. Meantime, the *Bürgermeister* was equally outraged with his son's conduct, but, like many another cowardly nature, vented his spleen upon the wrong person, the weak, defenseless, innocent girl.

He watched for his opportunity. One bright Sunday morning in June he saw from his window that Frau Deik, in her best dress, was gone to church without Catherine, and telling his wife and son to follow her, as it was late, and feeling then that he was safe from interruption, he crossed the street and pulled the knocker vigorously. Catherine came out of the kitchen to answer the summons, and would have felt no surprise at seeing the *Bürger-*

meister except that he usually attended church. But naturally supposing he wished to purchase tobacco or snuff, she said with politeness :

" What do you wish ?"

" I want nothing but to speak to you !" was the curt reply, as he turned to enter the back room.

Catherine, astonished beyond measure, ejaculated :

" My mistress is at church."

" I know it, and that 's why I came," said the *Bürgermeister* shortly.

With these words, he walked into the room and sat down on a chair by the sofa.

The girl followed him, with a rising fear. But, because her conscience was so clear, she repressed the unworthy feeling and, laying aside her kitchen apron, stood respectfully by the door. Presently she asked, as he did not speak :

" Herr Hoffmann, what do you want with me ?"

The *Bürgermeister* had counted much on the impression which his rank and importance would make on the orphan. She knew that the pastor of the church could not be chosen without his approval nor be effective with his dislike. Only the government officials who occasionally came over from Dantzig were equal to him. His power over the people was lordly. Quick of action and revengeful of injury, all dreaded to come under his disfavor. Besides, a recently-acquired corpulence had rendered his person most imposing and magisterial, and, in consequence thereof, he had ceased to go with the boats on the sea, while his profits from the catch were unchanged. But he never failed to superintend the fish division, and, with his broad shoulders, thick, short legs and sharp gray eyes always caused peace and fair play to reign among the workers. His was a nature that brooked no opposition, and the quiet, firm question of Catherine vexed him greatly. So he settled himself on the chair, clasped his knees with his short, fat hands and regarded her sternly. To better master his wrath, he then drew out his snuff-box, took a pinch, and, as he slowly replaced the article in his pocket, said:

"What do I want? I want you to keep quiet and answer all my questions. What is your name?" Catherine could not divine why the man should ask such a well-known thing, and only looked at him in surprise. The *Bürgermeister's* voice assumed a threatening tone, as he repeated: "I ask you what is your name?"

"Catherine Carvallos," said she, simply.

"Where did you come from?"

"Why, Herr Hoffman, you know that very well!" cried the girl, with increasing astonishment.

"I ask you where did you come from?" he repeated emphatically.

"From Dantzig Heisternest."

"Who was your mother?"

"Catherine Klaass, of Heisternest."

"Who was your father?"

"The Spanish corporal, Herr Carvallos."

"What 's your business?"

Then he angrily slapped his knee, as if the direct answers of his victim annoyed him.

Now there dawned upon Catherine's mind a premonition of coming evil. Alarmed by the thought and doubtful what to do, she suddenly said:

"*Bürgermeister*, you know very well that Frau Klaass was my grandmother, and that she asked Frau Deik to take me as a servant!"

"Servant! Servant! The daughter of a Spanish deserter, the grandchild of an old witch, and you think you will marry the son of a Helan *Bürgermeister!*" came in tones of mingled contempt and anger from his lips. "But don't flatter yourself if the witch did give you power to attract the young fool, that *I* am going to suffer it!"

"*Bürgermeister!*" cried poor Catherine, with crimson cheeks. "I declare I never thought of such a thing!"

"Thought or no thought, it is worse for them who are bewitched by you!" was the breathless reply. "And, mark my words, if it is true that Wilhelm is led off by you, I know how to punish, and I 'll show you that no bad women are permitted in this town!"

The crimson hue forsook the orphan's cheek and gave place to a death-like pallor, and, in a voice choked with emotion, she gasped:

"I am a virtuous woman! I have done no wrong!"

"A loose woman you are, whom it is a shame for Frau Deik to keep in her house!" cried the man, beside himself with rage.

Catherine's lips moved with scorn as she, with difficulty, said:

"Say no word against my kind mistress! She took me in compassion and gave me a home. What I have here done, I can show before God and men. I have not wanted your son to come here nor listened to his words, but neither she nor I could prevent his entering a public place. His visits have only been unpleasant, and I trust that you will keep him away in the future."

The *Bürgermeister* could not fail to be impressed with the earnestness and truth of the girl, although he was surprised and disappointed in evoking them. Had she been humble, acknowledged her sin and begged forgiveness, he would have gone away satisfied, but he could not bear to hear the whole blame in the matter put upon his son. And, as angry men like angry dogs snap at the nearest object to them, he caught her last words, and said contemptuously:

"Keep my son away! But what of Gotthard Meinart? You will make nothing of him, I tell you. Don't think the old man will keep his eyes shut! No right-minded father would let his son marry a witch's descendant. I am master here, and will warn Herr Meinart against you!"

This threat worked a very different effect upon the girl from what he expected. Shame and scorn had passed, and a quiet, proud indifference marked her countenance, as she returned:

"Do what you choose about it!"

In proportion to Catherine's self-possession was his indignant rage. He had no more charges to bring, and therefore must leave, but as he reached the threshold he cast a last angry glance behind him, repeating:

"I tell you I am the master here, and you shall feel my power."

Even to this the girl remained unmoved, and when the door was fastened resumed her apron and returned to the kitchen to prepare dinner. So long had the interview lasted that the fire was extinct, and Catherine hastened to make up for lost time by industrious work.

When all was finished, she sat down on the bench and felt the overwhelming weight of her wrongs. Gladly would she have relieved her burdened heart with tears, but she could not. At first she determined to reveal all the trouble to her kind mistress, but the recollection of Frau Deik's command to her never to refer to her grandmother and her superstitions again, raised a doubt as to her duty in the matter. And to tell her the cruelty of the *Bürgermeister's* charge—the extremity of his injustice—was hard, indeed.

After all, it might be better to keep silence and await her enemy's threatened action. For such sad musings the time drags slowly, and it was long before Frau Deik came home from church. When one has experienced great sorrow, the sight of a trusted friend gives great impulse to seek sympathy by confidence. So Catherine forgot her resolution to the contrary, and determined when Frau Deik asked the usual question, "Was anybody here?"

that she would make full confession of the interview. But strange to say, the old woman did not make any inquiry, and the girl, both from the unpleasantness of the subject and from disinclination to put Frau Deik in a bad humor after church, kept silence. Of course the good woman observed that Catherine was low-spirited, and at midday, when she saw various girls from the town going into the neighboring woods, proposed to her to join them. As the proposition was not agreeable, the girl took her seat on the doorstep respectfully lower than Frau Deik on the green bench near by. It was a lovely day. The sun shone warm and bright, the fleecy clouds against the blue background resembled banks of feathery snow, and the sea breeze blew fresh and cool through the narrow street. It was the best day of the season, and all who could walked out, while those who could not threw open doors and windows to let in the balmy air. Here and there women sauntered to the woods for grass and flowers, while men dotted the beach and watched the passing vessels.

Only one house remained closed up, as if uninhabited. This was the residence of the *Bürgermeister*, just opposite Frau Deik's shop. Not all the beauties of sea, earth and sky could enchain Catherine's attention beside that ominously silent, closed mansion.

Every slight noise on the street made her start with dread, lest it was the lordly master approaching once more.

About four o'clock Frau Deik, observing the singular silence of the opposite neighbors, asked:

"Catherine, has Wilhelm been here to-day?"

"No, ma'am," said she.

"Nor the *Bürgermeister* either?"

The desired moment had come. The girl had opened her mouth to confess, when the door of Herr Hoffmann's house opened and father and son crossed the street. Catherine felt a shiver run over her body, and dared not lift her eyes from her knitting.

The son walked like a prisoner by the *Bürgermeister*, who moved with more than ordinary strut toward Frau Deik.

Catherine was so convinced that the man had come to accuse her to her mistress that her first impulse was to flee. But the natural desire to hear and compare this reproach with the former detained her.

But her belief was unfounded.

"Good-day, neighbor," said the visitor, pleasantly. "Why do you sit out here?"

Now, Frau Deik had no patience with foolish questions, and being annoyed by this one, answered shortly:

"By your permission, because I feel like it."

On ordinary occasions the *Bürgermeister* would have been satisfied to pass on after such a rebuff, but to-day he lingered, and returned:

"I don't see why you work so hard. You labor as if for your daily bread and have no child to inherit your possessions. For Karl you have a plenty, and what 's the use of more?"

If there was anything more displeasing to Frau Deik than nonsensical queries, it was to be reminded of her death and Karl's inheritance. So she said, in an indignant tone:

"Where is it recorded that Karl Deik is my heir?"

"Why, Frau Deik, you are a mortal like the rest of us, and can't live forever," continued the *Bürgermeister*, undaunted, and his voice was so good-humored that Catherine could scarcely realize how angry he had shown himself to her a few hours previously.

"Live or die," retorted the old woman, thoroughly upset, "I am mistress of my own property! My husband gave me full power, and I will show you that no one need count on disposing of it for me!"

Catherine, who had not imagined such a turn to the conversation, looked up in surprise, and detected a knowing exchange of glances between father and son. The *Bürgermeister* shrugged his shoulders, pulled up his trousers, adjusted his coat and said, with a forced smile,

"Surely, you are entirely right on the subject! And if you sit out here, it is nobody's business either, but you should not let Catherine do it!"

"I?" cried the girl in affrighted surprise, as she instinctively rose and went into the house.

"Good-day, neighbor!" said the *Bürgermeister*, and walked away with Wilhelm.

The father's mind was very much eased. He had accomplished the desired object—to find out whether Catherine had revealed his attack upon her, which Frau Deik would surely resent as breach of neighborly courtesy. But because she had spared the revelation, he decided that she was more guilty

THE DOOR OPENED, AND THE GIRL ENTERED.—*See Page* 112.

than she acknowledged, and he vowed to punish her well.

Ever since church-time, there had been a stormy scene in his house, for Wilhelm showed himself as stubborn to give up his suit of Catherine, as she had been ready to reject it. His mind was firmly set upon marrying the girl, and he defied his father's authority. His threats were loud and solemn, that he would leave home and never return, if he were thwarted. But though the *Bürgermeister* suspected that he meant to marry Catherine and emigrate to America, where any man could make a living, he did not very much fear the execution of it. But Frau Hoffmann was full of alarm and displeasure.

As she was a discreet, politic woman, who knew how to utilize circumlocution for the accomplishment of any purpose, she did not utter a word about Catherine in reference to her son; but, when her husband said that he had warned old Meinart about the girl and, if need be, would run her out of Hela in disgrace, she put in:

"Don't think that Frau Deik will let the apple of her eye be mistreated in that way! It is not wise to get into trouble with her, and pay the highest price for everything you buy!"

"The girl makes ten to one," replied Herr Hoffmann, on whom the last argument had weight. "But I think, as Karl will soon be home, Frau Deik will be glad to get rid of Catherine!"

"Glad!" repeated the wife indignantly. "You have made a great mistake there. Anybody can tell how Frau Deik esteems the girl by her clothing, and then the way she trusts her indicates that she regards her as her own child. My belief is that she cares very little for Karl in comparison, and, if he don't marry the girl, he will have to be content with half the inheritance."

"Karl will not marry a servant girl whom everybody else despises!" cried the *Bürgermeister*, scornfully.

"I, at least, might take her in," said his wife. "People often marry for money, but at least everybody should marry to suit himself and not others."

The *Bürgermeister* could scarcely trust his senses. He approached his wife, seized her arm, shook her well and ejaculated:

"What do you mean by this talk? Will you strengthen Wilhelm in his madness? Do you want him to marry this—this child of a runaway soldier?"

"Want it? God knows I don't! I can't bear the thought," was the fervent response. "But what I say I say, and what I would do if I were master I know."

Just here Wilhelm stepped between his parents, and told his mother not to beg for him, as he was a man, and would do what he chose.

"Silence, I tell you!" commanded the father, and the mother began to weep and sob out:

"God is my witness that I don't want to have anything to do with the girl. And I know it is a great honor to be the first people in Hela. But sometimes it is better to give up at first than to cry one's eyes out when it is too late. As Frau Deik treats the girl as her child and would be willing for her to marry Karl, why might not we do the same? I cannot bear to think of my son going away on the wide world, though I am old, and will be here but a little while."

This judicious harangue had the desired effect upon both men, making the one thoughtful and the other contented. The artful woman had gained the main thing desired—time—and depended upon future machinations for the completion of her scheme. Not that she had the slightest idea of Wilhelm's marrying Catherine, but if she could only prevent his running away at once, she promised herself to unite him to another girl of her own choosing.

With this comforting thought she left the room. Neither father nor son was in humor for a *tête-á-tête*, and no sooner was the door closed behind the quasi-peacemaker that they took down their hats and capes, and accidentally held the conversation just described with Frau Deik.

When the two sauntered down the street from the shop, the *Bürgermeister* exclaimed:

"Karl will play the devil when he returns!" and sticking his hand deeper into his trousers' pockets, added: "Karl had better have stayed in service."

Wilhelm did not reply, and after a few more strides, he went on:

"Frau Deik had a thousand thalers when her husband died. To deprive Karl of this would be just like Frau Deik. But if she should also take away the house and furniture—"

At this point the two men separated and went their respective ways.

CHAPTER XII.

When the Hoffmanns turned away from Frau Deik, she knitted so rapidly that the stitches could not be observed. This was a sure indication of unusual wrath. She had been touched upon her tenderest point, for, though she did not fear death, she would not bear the slightest reference to it. To be so frequently reminded of Karl's inheritance was equivalent to being laid aside before she was dead. At such times she regretted that she had worked so hard, determined to spend as much as she could for the future, and heartily hoped she would have nothing to leave him. To vex and annoy everybody, she sometimes thought of investing all her means in an organ for the church, which would be a constant reminder of their disappointed calculations. But such thoughts were only confined to her angry moods. If she had known what interpretation the Hoffmanns had placed upon her language she would have been surprised, indeed. Nothing was further from her sober intentions than defrauding the natural and only heir of the Deiks of his rights. Good sense and family pride required that the home, which had descended from father to son for more than a century should not be diverted from the proper heir.

It was truly no fault of Karl's that she had failed to have a son, and no matter what kind of a man he was, it would have been ridiculous and wrong to put an alien and a stranger in his place. Least of all would she, in her sober senses, think of making the poor orphan from Dantzig Heisternest the heir of all the valued property of a *Bürgerfrau* of Hela.

But Frau Deik was to-day greatly incensed. When the author of her vexation was out of sight, the windows of his opposite dwelling vexed her, because the sun struck the glass and dazzled her eyes, and his wife vexed her because she allowed the dog to howl on the door-step. Even the swallows vexed her, because she knew their presence prophesied an impending storm. The truth is that nothing pleases an angry person, and Frau Deik, when she entered her house to escape these annoyances, found the sight of Catherine no less displeasing.

"Don't sit here!" she said sharply. "Go out and air yourself!"

Catherine knew better than to make demur to such a tone of command, and resumed her former position on the door-step.

But when her mistress soon appeared in her Sunday kerchief and silk apron, as if to pay a visit, and locked the shop door behind her, Catherine was so astonished that she involuntarily asked:

"Are you locking the door?"

"Yes," was the curt reply. "I will be back by seven o'clock."

"But suppose some one comes?" returned the girl.

"Let him come again!" was the still sharper reply.

Catherine dared to say no more, but when Frau Deik had gone a few steps, she timidly called after her:

"How shall I get in?"

"You can wait where you are or take a walk," said the old woman, bent upon showing her perfect command of her own property and never dreaming of the inferences drawn by the poor girl.

Never before had Frau Deik closed her door upon her servant, nor was it her custom to bid her stay outdoors or go away. A terrible fear seized her that the *Bürgermeister* had sent her away for the purpose of convincing Frau Deik of her guilt. Memory rapidly reviewed the happy years of her sojourn under the roof of her benefactress, and she suddenly realized the strength of her love and gratitude to its owner. She now knew no other human being had the same hold upon her heart. To carry out the will and receive the approval of this kind mistress was her highest delight in life. How could she fail to almost adore the one who had rescued her from want and supplied all her necessities, religious and physical?

And yet she had never dared more direct expression of gratitude for them than kissing fervently the hand of the giver. Frau Deik was the only person in the world who had proved herself a trusty friend, for the pastor had no way of bestowing benefits other than spiritual, and the attentions of Wilhelm and Gotthard she could not regard as honorable, in view of her forlorn condition. Aside from Frau Deik, poverty and loneliness confronted her. How fervently she wished that good woman was either her mother or guardian! Then she could easily confess what lay so heavy on her heart. But between mistress and servant there lay such a broad gulf, where confidences were concerned, that she knew not how to bridge it. An indescribable feeling of desertion thus entered her heart, and an unpleasant presentiment followed that she could not much longer live in Hela.

Then the days of childhood came vividly to mind —her grandmother, Mathes, Pinor, the beautiful woods, the Sunken City. But an involuntary shudder ensued at remembrance of the repeated cautions of both pastor and mistress to put such memories down. But the more she tried to conquer them the less she succeeded. How vivid seemed the hope of reaching her father's native land and seeing it from the town lighthouse. She smiled to think of her childish folly. She now knew that nothing further than Dantzig was visible, though during her three years' residence in Hela she had never mounted the tower. She knew no better reason for this neglect than the association of the lighthouse with the forbidden memories, and the repeated invitations of Gotthard to accompany him thither. Such brooding produced an unwonted melancholy, in the midst of which the beauty of the day or the natural buoyancy of youth and health reasserted their sway. She thought she would not mope longer, but take a walk, as her mistress suggested. Only she did not follow the direction of the other pleasure-seekers, but the path toward the sea.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when she left the end of the town and reached the beach. Bright sun and water met her gaze, and the glass dome of the lighthouse sparkled almost as if the lamp was lit. The white, clean tower attracted the girl's admiration, and almost without knowing how or why, she found herself climbing its winding stairs. The unusual exertion of mounting steps, combined with a dry, suffocating heat from the sun's long power, made the girl stop breathless at the top of the long flight.

Mr. Meinart, hearing the approaching steps, opened the door of the small room and confronted the heated, embarrassed visitor. As only a few hours previously the *Bürgermeister* had warned him against this very person, the old man naturally presumed she had come to ask some favor from him, and bluntly asked:

"What do you come here for?" But, really, he was glad to have any one break the monotony of his life, and added, as he limped back in the room and she followed: "I see everybody has gone out this pretty day!"

Catherine, but little recovered from her embarrassment, replied:

"My mistress went to take coffee with Frau

Menken and, as she told me to walk out, I had had never been here—"

She paused, awaiting the encouragement on which she had a right to depend, because he had shown himself rather glad to see her and, on holidays, had often passed jokes with her in the shop.

But her hopes were blasted. The old man began to suspect that the girl was trying to waylay Gotthard, and that his son should not marry her he was determined. So he stood by the table and tried to fill his short clay pipe. But, from mingled weakness and nervousness, the tobacco was hard to get right, and some seconds elapsed ere it was placed, the flint and steel used for making a light, and the smoke drawn in quick puffs by his lips. During this last process, he said in broken words to finish Catherine's remark:

"Up here? But what is there here to see or to get?"

The pipe being gone out by this time, another light had to be struck and the process renewed. Meanwhile, he placed himself upon the wooden stool, just before the support which held the compass, and repeated:

"There is nothing at all here to see! Nothing at all!"

Catherine stood by the table, speechless with embarrassment, and felt the sharp eyes of the lighthouse-keeper scan her figure from head to foot After another pause, the old man repeated:

"No, there is nothing at all here to see!" and then went on, as if the idea suggested others: "It is terrible to be here always alone, through the long days and nights—through storm and wind, thunder and lightning—all alone! To sit here always and watch the water and the ships going to Dantzig! They come from England, Sweden, Denmark and America, and many other places. They come and go, but some do not return. Often I sit and ask myself: Wherefrom and whither and what if I should move the light to the wrong side?"

He smiled with savage pleasure to see the effect his words produced on the listener, and continued:

"If I did it, great shipwrecks there would be! And all the prayers the pastor might offer would not save them, but—"

"But, surely, you would not do it?" gasped the shocked girl.

The old man stretched out his hand, drew the girl close to his side, and said, in a lower voice:

"No, I would not do it, although it is no worse a deed than those for which men receive crosses and honors. But," and now he looked cautiously around to assure himself that he was not overheard, "but there is One who don't suffer it. And if they are drowned, the water will not hold them. They come out and, dead though they be, they mount the bare walls of the tower by day or night, by sunlight or firelight."

He broke off because his pipe-stem was clogged, and he must seek an old wire to clear it.

Catherine stood motionless and distraught by his side. At last she managed to articulate:

"Do you believe this?"

"Don't you?" he retorted.

"The pastor says it is nothing but sinful superstition," she answered more firmly.

Herr Meinart shook his head wisely and answered:

"Nobody can be more clever than their knowledge. At the parsonage or in Dantzig these things were never heard of, nor have I seen them since I have watched the new lighthouse, but before the old beacon was removed there was much talk about them. I myself knew a man who had seen the spirit with the lantern, and all said their prayers would have availed if the beach had been blessed."

This weird harangue struck Catherine mysteriously. Confused visions of childish belief, so long thrust away, awoke in her mind. Even the old man seemed altered. As often as she had seen him in Hela and as marked a figure as his crooked leg made him on the street, to-day, in the warm, high room, he looked smaller and more specter-like as he discoursed to her on topics forbidden by the pastor. The girl felt a desire to rid herself of the spell of these superstitious feelings, and asked:

"Can I go out on the gallery?"

"Yes, go if you wish," replied old Meinart, impressively, "but I tell you there is nothing to see!"

A strong sea-breeze quickly served to dissipate the shadows made upon her mind by the old creature's talk.

One glance over the scene below almost took away her breath. For the first time in her life, she saw an extended view, and realized the connection between countries. She had never conceived how her native land rose from the sea and how small it was beside the mainland opposite. The world below was strange, and the peninsula as beautiful to her eyes as the wonderful city of the sea had been.

The warm weather had dotted the meadowland at the foot of the tower with white, red and yellow flowers, making a garden of beauty between the shining sands of the shore and the dark green woods farther inland.

A little way from the lighthouse spread the town, with its white houses, sunlit windows, church and parsonage, and the bell-tower rising from the center. Yet farther on the site of old Hela, destroyed by fire and pirates, stood the ruins of a church, where superstition said a treasure was buried and watched by a fierce, fire-vomiting dog. But to see the broken walls bathed in clear sunlight and covered with green vines suggested nothing more than the picturesque. Catherine's eyes returned most lovingly to the neat, cleanly Hela where neither inhabitant was visible on the street, nor poultry in the yards. Only the swallows darted here and there above the roofs, or sought the nests afforded them by the hospitable eaves of the houses. Now and then a white sea-gull flew by the tower toward the wooded heights of the mainland, to-day for the first time seen by the wondering girl. As she gazed in admiration upon the peninsula, Catherine seemed to see a paradise.

She could not divine how her mother had ever left such a home, or why she had longed for another. So near by the church where she had partaken of the Lord's Supper was the pastor's pretty garden, reaching almost to the sea. And above all, in the middle of the street, was her beloved home, Frau Deik's house, whose grayish walls, white shutters and shining glass distinguished it above the rest.

She rejoiced in all the new landscape as if it were her own property, and so lighthearted was she as to have tried to fly, if any one had told her that she could.

In such a happy mood she heard the door behind her open and Gotthard's voice ask joyfully:

"Are you here?"

She turned in displeasure, and meeting his loving blue eyes, she remembered that he might well interpret her coming as a favor to himself, and therefore answered in a very cold manner:

"I knew that you were not here."

Gotthard was so completely set back that he could not speak. But the girl did not relish his standing silent by her side, especially as she feared Herr Meinart might be watching their movements from within. The son was also cramped by his father's proximity, but seeing Catherine about to leave the gallery, he asked, with sudden fervor:

"Catherine, can't you bear me?"

This question brought back the morning's trouble forcibly and destroyed all the recent bright thoughts, and the girl, like most mortals when vexed, venting her spleen upon the nearest object, answered defiantly:

"No, I can't bear you! Leave me in peace! I don't want to see you again!"

This defiance roused Gotthard's jealousy, and he cried hastily, as he seized her by the arm:

"You are thinking of Wilhelm!"

"Let me loose!" exclaimed the girl, trying to loosen his hold.

"No," cried Gotthard, catching her left hand in his right, "you shall not go until you tell me!"

"I have no use for any man. I have nothing to ask of them. *I hate men!*"

The scorn and indignation in her eyes fully corroborated these fierce words.

The man released his hold, but whispered menacingly:

"Take care, if you do not tell the truth!"

Then he stepped back, and Catherine reëntered the room where Herr Meinart was taking his coffee and bread. She hastily bade him good night, as it was growing late, and he was glad for her to go. When he knew she was out of hearing, he called Gotthard, and said, with an oracular air:

"You arranged to meet her here, did you? But, mark me, as neither of you has anything to live on, you had better get rid of her at once."

"I wish I had never seen her!" muttered the young man, but, though his words fell on the father's ear, he made no reply.

CHAPTER XIII.

From this time poor Catherine had a hard time, for Wilhelm, relying upon his mother's help, dogged the girl's footsteps whenever she left the house. Gotthard, convinced that she would smile upon this open wooing, watched her with sharpest jealousy, and everybody in Hela believed that the *Bürgermeister* silently allowed the thing, because Frau Deik was going to make her heir to her property.

No one dared to ask the lord of Hela about the matter, but more than one had tried to get the truth from his wife. With usual policy, Frau Hoffmann replied that no person could read another one's intentions, although Frau Deik made so much of Catherine; both she and her husband wanted to see their son marry a *Bürger* girl, and no other. Every country to its customs. She had seen a woman in Dantzig clothed in silk and velvet and riding in a carriage who had been a servant in the house she owned. But Hela was not Dantzig, and it was nothing that Catherine was a proper, industrious girl.

Naturally, it happened that both Frau Deik and Catherine heard these rumors, and one day the former said quietly:

"People say you have designs upon Wilhelm Hoffmann. Is it true?"

The girl felt as if a stone was lifted from her heart, in having this opportunity for confessing all she wished.

Frau Deik listened quietly to her, and replied:

"I was very certain that you could not be so foolish! You cannot marry a *Bürger's* son, and you will not bring disgrace on me, I know. Don't trouble yourself about them, but attend to your business, and I will try to manage them!"

After that, she kept the young men as much as possible from Catherine, and the watchful gossips inferred from her action that she intended the girl to marry Karl. Of course, the attentions of the male sex and the kindness of Frau Deik to Catherine evoked the jealousy and enmity of the other young women in Hela. Various were the charges brought against her. Some said that men were like children, intent upon securing what was peculiar and, as they could not get a Moorish princess, admired the girl for her accidental resemblance to one. Others said that she was an improper creature, who adorned herself to catch all the beaux, and did not intend to marry any one. There were those who believed she only seduced these men to follow her in order to prove her favor to Karl when he came. That Frau Deik would or would not approve the match was not taken into consideration, as the two young people were more than a match for one old woman. Already, Catherine seemed to have things her own way; not only with her mistress, but with the pastor. How cunning and artful she was to ingratiate herself with the learned pastor! She would meet him on the street or anywhere, and converse with the ease and grace which none of them possessed in his presence. Altogether, she was a wicked and objectionable character, whose conduct should be punished by being shunned by all decent women and left to her male admirers.

Poor Catherine was entirely guiltless of the charges brought, and undeserving of the severe chastisement inflicted. Very soon she began to feel the edge of the malicious persecution, without comprehending the why or wherefore. Ill-will is like bad air. When we feel its influence, it renders us sick and miserable, as does an impure atmosphere. Heretofore, Catherine had been always summoned to help the needy, and rejoiced to render her services. But, suddenly, all desire and invitation for her presence ceased. She instinctively felt that distrust and dislike were given her instead of kindness and confidence, and, naturally, her own feelings became modeled upon those of her enemies. For the first time the girl experienced real heart-sorrow. The years of her sojourn under Frau Deik's roof had been peacefully spent, because she received the favor of mistress and neighbors.

Seldom had she thought of the miserable past or the uncertain future. She had the pastor's command to forget the former, and promise to provide for the future. But now that she was mature and worldly-wise to some extent, care and sorrow pressed upon her heart. Her liveliness melted before the fierce heat of unkindness.

Neither at the spring, the butcher's or the baker's would the young girls vouchsafe a remark or address a question to her. In the shop they demanded what they wished to purchase and silently left.

The men did not fail to observe the conduct of young and old women, and shrewdly guessing the cause, became the more importunate in their attentions to Catherine. But this action was annoying in the extreme to the girl. She laid aside her old, pleasant dignity, was rude to one, sharp to another, spiteful to another, and acted so strangely that her mistress first jested and afterward scolded her for her wrongdoing. It is an old but true saying that in service as in marriage, parties should beware of the first unkind word. Poor Catherine soon realized that the former pleasant relations to her mistress were altered.

There was no change in food or clothing, nor was there cause for complaint on either side as to fulfilled duty, and yet a nameless mistrust separated them which almost broke the orphan's heart.

One day Frau Deik visited the pastor and said:

"I have no complaint to make of Catherine, and yet the longer she stays with me the more I realize the difference between her and an own daughter. I think it a misfortune for an old woman like me not to have a daughter."

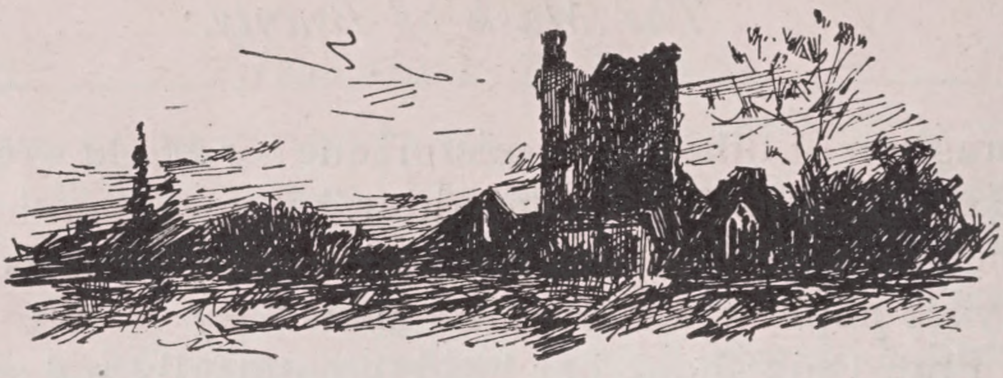
"Well," replied the pastor in a consoling voice, "your nephew will soon be home."

Frau Deik shook her head thoughtfully and said :

"Karl could not bear the girl when she came, and now that she has grown so pretty, I doubt whether it is proper to have her in the house with him. What to do with her I don't know."

The good man did not realize how unpleasant affairs had grown, nor how Catherine many times thought of running away if Karl's treatment on his return was as bad as when he left.

And Karl soon came.



CHAPTER XIV.

One day toward the end of September, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Karl once more entered Frau Deik's home. In the small garden behind the house cabbages and turnips were dug up, preparatory to being stored away for winter use, for, although the midday sun was warm, mornings and nights gave warning of cold weather.

On every market-day the fishing-boats brought back from town loads of potatoes and peat for the Helans. This was market-day, and in one of the boats came Karl Deik from Putzig. When the long-expected nephew appeared, his first glance fell upon Catherine, as she mounted the steps leading from the vegetable cellar. Frau Deik was below preparing the receptacles, and the girl was carrying down the cabbages in baskets. The bright sunlight brought into clear relief her well-shaped figure in tight jerkin, a narrow dress and her dark cheeks flushed by physical exertion, while the black kerchief set off her shining hair and the involuntary expression of displeasure dignified her black eyes. She stood upon the next to the last step, so that her form was not visible below the knee, and such a pretty picture did she make that Karl exclaimed warmly:

"Zounds, Catherine, you have grown beautiful!"

These words produced, instead of pleasure, the opposite impression upon the girl, and Frau Deik, who caught them, came up from the cellar, little gratified by this first demonstration from her future boarder. But the sight of him improved her temper. Surely, the military discipline had worked a wonderful change in figure and expression of the young man. His carriage was erect, his glance stately, his hair cut like an officer's, and his whole demeanor self-important. His soldier uniform, black hat and small cane, did not fail to please Frau Deik, as she knew not even the *Bürgermeister's* Wilhelm had such fine clothing. The sight of Karl, thus attractive, brought into the old woman's heart a feeling which, to her non-analytical mind, was the instinct of blood-relationship, but was really no more than relapse to old custom.

A few minutes before she had looked forward to the young man's return with dread, and had not concealed from Catherine that she expected him to be a grand city boarder, whom nothing would please; but, now that he stood before her, she was glad to see him, and though he, as a stranger, criticised the smallness of the house, the insipidness of the coffee, the saltiness of the butter, she did not resent his rudeness, but brought out the best she had and gave undisguised admiration to his handsome person.

Such treatment strengthened Karl's vanity and gave free vent to his tongue. He was quick to see the impression made upon his aunt, and determined to turn it to account. He discoursed about the king, prince and princesses before whom he had paraded, and whose palaces he had guarded; about the theatres he had attended and the lovely uniform with golden lace he had worn; of the court-officer he had served, and many other attractions and advantages renounced by him in order to return and take care of his aunt. Strange to say, Frau Deik, with her knowledge and just suspicion of human nature, was too rejoiced to have her handsome, interesting nephew once more to exercise the proper judgment, and gave due credence to all he said. Besides, she was, like most mortals, incapable of judging her nephew by the same strict law as other men. Pride—family pride—filled her breast when Karl bore himself to one after another of the Helans with consequential air and, even to *Bürgermeister*, showed how much he thought of himself. As a tribute to the discharged soldier of the Imperial Alexander, Grenadier Regiment, the good woman sent Catherine to fetch a bottle of her best Geneva wine, and Karl drank with every visitor to prove that his fine dress had not made him proud.

That evening, when all company was gone, Frau Deik sat down in her cosy room opposite Karl, to be further amused and edified by his conversation, and Catherine, after finishing her kitchen work, came in, as usual, with her spinning-wheel.

"What do you want?" asked Frau Deik.

The girl was so much surprised by the question, that the mistress repeated it.

"I want to spin as I always do," returned Catherine, still more astonished.

The old woman, appearing not to observe this feeling, said:

"Somebody must stay in the shop, for, if you go back and forth, you will make this room cold. Take your wheel along!"

The orphan obeyed quickly, with the sad realization that the so-called bond of kinship had prevailed against her.

No sooner had the door closed behind the girl's retreating form, than Karl Deik motioned in the direction followed, and asked:

"Is she tamed?"

This question brought the mistress to realize what a grievous wrong she had done the poor girl; but, when a person is determined to act against his best instincts, many excuses will suggest themselves for the course. She thought that it was best for Catherine to show Karl that she was a servant, so that he would act in a discreet, superior manner toward her, and answered coldly:

"She is altogether tamed. I can depend upon her for industry, honor, constancy and amiability. But what to do with her now, I don't know. I don't care to keep her, as there is so little to do in winter!"

"Could you get along without her?" said Karl, indifferently.

"Now that you are here I can," replied the aunt, giving him a searching glance.

He nodded his head and twirled his mustache, but a close observer would have noted that he was thinking of other things. Frau Deik, trying to guess what he meditated, ventured:

"Are you going to sea, or—"

"You must have somebody to attend the garden and do rough work!" he said positively.

"And, pray, what are you going to do?" asked the aunt, sharply.

His tone in answering, while aiming to be jesting, showed unmistakable offense and determination:

"I did not come back here to cut wood and fetch peat, nor to stand in the shop after returning from fishing. Rather than that I would have saved myself the long journey and stayed in Berlin."

Though Frau Deik was not pleased with this remark, she tried to attribute it to jest, and hoped that after her nephew had shown off to the neighbors, he would settle down to work. At any rate, she would not spoil the first evening's delights by disagreeable forebodings, and replied evasively:

"If I can't do better, I will take another girl."

"But why should Catherine go away?" persisted Karl.

This question, though spoken without design by the nephew, aroused suspicion in the aunt. She put together his exclamation of pleasure at the first glimpse of the girl with the present query, and drew an unjust conclusion. But she vented her spleen, not upon the supposed guilty nephew, but upon the innocent girl now sitting lonely in the cold shop. She earnestly desired to nip any liking for Catherine in the bud, and went blunderingly to accomplish it.

"I can and do not complain of the girl," she replied after a pause, "but I want to get rid of her because the neighbors discuss her. She is too much admired by men."

A gleam of mingled curiosity and interest shot, unnoticed by Frau Deik, over Karl's face as he repeated:

"Is she much admired?"

"I have never seen her show interest in any one. She stays at home and does her work, but all the young men are crazy about her. Gotthard Meinart dogs her footsteps, and Wilhelm, across the street, has taken a notion to marry her, because his mother has put some foolish idea in his head of my leaving her something. I am afraid they will turn the girl's head, and I want her to leave before I have to treat her badly."

"The men are fools!" laughed Karl, while anger lurked in his voice. "What made Frau Hoffmann expect you to give Catherine anything? Has she forgotten my existence?"

The nephew's indignation delighted Frau Deik, who had long resented the liberty this woman had taken in disposing of her effects for her. The lofty position occupied by the *Bürgermeister's* wife had so far protected her from being attacked, but Frau Deik, now swelling with wrath, ejaculated:

"The pastor shall hold her to account. I will be certain. I will not fail—"

"If need be, we shall do so. But if Catherine is useful, why not keep her? Now that a man is in the house, he head will be kept level, and I dare swear that any fellow you don't want to sit about the shop, sha' n't do it!" interrupted Karl, imperiously.

He had drawn his own inferences from his aunt's revelations, and wanted to show her that he had learned more things in Berlin than military tactics. The knowledge of other men's love for the beautiful servant had kindled a vague desire to outstrip them all, and the surest way to accomplish his purpose was to keep her at hand.

Then he rose, poured out a glass of wine from the side-table, drank it down at a gulp, and said:

"I haven't tasted such good Geneva wine in the last three years, though, in Berlin, we get the best from Manover and France. Truly, I am glad to get home!"

This was the signal to renew his reminiscences of the great city and of other cities and countries through which he had passed, and Frau Deik listened with breathless attention to all he said.

When the clock struck ten, every one in Hela was asleep excepting themselves, the street watchman and the lighthouse-keeper. As Karl ceased speaking and wearily yawned, his auditor rose and opened the shop-door to summon Catherine to bed.

The lamp burned dimly on the counter, and the girl leaned her head against it, asleep. The noise of the opening door roused her suddenly, making her spring to her feet and look around with the surprise natural to unexpected awakening.

Frau Deik walked to the front of the shop to secure the money and bar the door. Karl, utilizing the opportunity, came close to the girl and whispered:

"Is she always so sleepy? The Berlin ladies are active day and night."

When Catherine, flushed with embarrassment, attempted to leave the room, he put himself in the way and pretended that she was awkward from sleepiness and could not find the door.

"Save us!" he said, so low that Frau Deik, who was counting the day's receipts out loud, could not hear. "Will she trip over her own feet? What did you do last night that you can't hold your eyes open now?"

Then he turned off, and the girl ran to bed with the same terror as if she had seen a ghost.

CHAPTER XV.

Frau Deik made a mistake when she went to bed that night, thinking that her nephew would prove a help and support. It only required a few weeks to prove his intentions.

She had, sensibly, supposed that, after he had visited all his relatives and friends in his new city dress and given them his experiences, he would resume his fisher's costume and work.

When the old woman asked him about his failure to do so, he explained that he had sold his clothes when he left Hela, as he knew that he would outgrow them, and now it was extravagant to buy a new suit of the kind, when his uniform was quite new. He did not add that he dreaded insulting his shapely limbs by the loose trousers and jacket, after honoring them with the becoming uniform. Nor did he acknowledge that the costume was the best part of soldier life. How often had he lain in barracks and longed to be on the sea in an open boat! How often had he envied the laboring people passing through the streets, whose actions and goings were not cramped as his! How often had he believed that Hela was a better place than

Berlin for him! But not a word of such acknowledgment escaped his lips after he reached his native land.

On the contrary, he began, at once, to criticise the town and suggest means for its improvement. When an old citizen would suggest that no change —no improvement—was possible to a place that had been unaltered for centuries, he would ridicule the idea and declare that, if more young men were to go into military service instead of fishing, they would sustain his position. Why, people in Berlin did not believe him when he told of the primitive custom practiced by the Helans of all fishing and dividing the catch. It was incredible where there were variety of business and plenty of money, that people should be so foolish. All fishing towns were not alike. His corporal lived in a village of Pomerania, where the people knew something besides catching fish. A steamboat ran there from Berlin, and thousands of visitors spent the bathing season in the village. The poorest dwellings were rented for hundreds of thalers to these rich visitors. Why might not Hela be made such a resort? Then the *Bürgermeister* or Frau Deik or any other citizen could make more money in one summer than by half a lifetime of fishing. Such plans and thoughts were not without weight to those whom the desire for gain and weariness of the monotonous life possessed.

Day and night, the back-room of Frau Deik's was filled with different men, who drank and discussed with her nephew the impractical subject of making the town a celebrated bathing-place. Thus, time flew, and Karl spent his hours in ease and luxury, without seeming to be lazy. Catherine had much labor to keep cleaned the eating and drinking vessels, for every visitor had to be treated hospitably.

When Frau Deik remonstrated with her nephew for the great and useless expenditure, he asked her if she had ever sold as much brandy, butter, coffee, herring or Lübecker cheese as since his return, and called it the beginning of the prosperous future, when Hela should be a bathing resort. Once inaugurated, the poor woman could not stop this course of action on his part, and soon realized herself powerless to manage her own house. She had asked the *Bürgermeister* to help her bring Karl to his proper demeanor, but, unfortunately for her, that important person was interested in the bathing schemes, and was corresponding with friends in both Dantzig and Putzig as to their feasibility.

In despair, she then turned to the pastor; but his sensible representations of the futility of the hopes only incited Karl and others to greater interest.

Among those most intent upon the design were Wilhelm and Gotthard. Although they were so much displeased at the return of Karl Deik, his grand airs and bragging talk soon fascinated them, so that they spent much time with him. If in the town there was usually little business done in winter, this season was marked by exceptional idleness among the young men. Fathers looked with pain upon this glaring delinquency of their sons, and mothers were loud in protestation against the new ideas, which had demoralized all the men.

These *Bürgerfraus*, always used to living in their own homes, did not relish the thought of grand strangers coming in to regard them as servants. Nor did they think that fathers and sons were likely to set out on a prosperous career by visiting and drinking at Karl Deik's request.

Frau Hoffmann led off in complaint against the ex-soldier, as he had persuaded the *Bürgermeister* to offer his dwelling for rent to seekers for health in the Dantzig *Times*. She declared that Karl intended to offer his aunt's house soon, though she had often heard that person say *her house was her own*, and, as to herself, as long as she lived she would never suffer a stranger to occupy her home!

But the men continued firm in their adherence to the cherished plan and their visits to the chamber of consultation. Thus, the women had to pour the vials of their wrath upon something, and, as the residence of Frau Deik was the seat of trouble, one of its inmates must bear the blame.

As Karl was young and handsome, could discourse about Berlin and other great things, and was polite and eligible to the *Bürger* girls, the merited blame was only put on him by Frau Hoffmann. Of course Frau Deik, who was equal sufferer and complainer as the other women, could not be blamed for what occurred in her house. Catherine, then, as the only other inmate of the place, and as a weak, friendless orphan, had to bear the accumulated weight of censure.

The more the women thought about it the more plainly they saw that the girl was the cause—the root—of all trouble. Everybody knew that Wilhelm and Gotthard had formerly cared nothing for Karl's company, and it could only be in hopes of seeing her that they made a pretense of visiting him now. The cunning girl knew very well how much it would be to her advantage for the place to be a resort, as she could make herself fascinating to city as well as country folks. Lastly, few failed to believe her an unvirtuous girl since the handsome Karl had returned.

And truly poor Catherine found it difficult to secure herself from the rudeness of the ex-soldier. The information which Frau Deik had given him on his arrival to prevent his interest in the girl, had brought about just the opposite effect from the one desired. To know that others had wooed her in vain excited his vanity and desire to prove that a soldier of the Imperial Alexander Regiment could be successful when they failed.

One evening toward the Spring, when the wind was wildly blowing over the snow and sea, and there was no possibility of fishing, Wilhelm, Gotthard and two others came to the shop on the ostensible mission of discussing "business" with Karl. But this business began as usual with drinking, and ended with card-playing. As usual, also, Karl had taken possession of the cosy back room, and Frau Deik, in order not to see what she could not prevent, sat with Catherine in the shop. Both sat silent, and pursued their avocations of knitting and sewing.

Frau Deik was too proud to acknowledge to her servant that one—and the only one of her family living—had treated her ill. She was too proud to say how Karl had set her aside and taken command of her house.

Outside was heard the roaring wind, inside the cards as they struck the table. Now and then Karl would demand a bottle of beer or other liquor, which, in response to Frau Deik's nod, Catherine conveyed to him.

The hours wore on, and two of the company left without altering the course of the gambling and drinking, while the two women (knowing each others' thoughts, but prevented from speaking by their positions of mistress and maid) sat and longed for deliverance from their misery. At last, Frau Deik, despairing of an end to the game, rose and called Catherine to follow her to bed.

After they were gone, the luck which had been Karl's, seemed to change.

"Your luck is over!" cried Wilhelm, mockingly.

"Quite the contrary," was the cool response. "Bad luck at play, good luck at love, as they say in Berlin, and I 'll prove it to you here!"

"So you flatter yourself," returned Wilhelm, looking toward the door through which Catherine had left. "But she is a different person. Only, if you want to marry—"

"Marry?" retorted Karl, derisively.

Wilhelm looked at him in surprise, and Gotthard turned pale, and asked threateningly, as he fastened his eye upon him:

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why, nothing much!" answered Karl, indifferently. "I only mean that it is idle to talk of marrying her! Who ever heard of a *Bürger's* son marrying a servant? But if I want her—I have seen others before— Why, in Berlin I never failed. But marrying is absurd!"

Neither of the rejected lovers of Catherine answered this speech of the braggart, and resumed the game quietly. But they could not fix their minds upon what they were doing. Both resented the imputations cast upon the girl, and Gotthard, especially, distrusted Karl and feared for Catherine's safety. So he proposed to leave, remarking, for excuse, that the light was almost extinguished.

At the door, Gotthard paused significantly, and Karl, who was anxious to go to bed, asked impatiently:

"What do you want? Anything?"

"Yes—no!" returned he.

"Well, hurry out, or I will have to break my bones in the dark house!"

Then Gotthard seized him by the arm, and said hastily:

"Deik, what is between you and Catherine?"

"Are you a fool?" exclaimed Karl, trying to free himself, without success.

Then Gotthard repeated more pressingly:

"What do you intend?"

"Nothing! Nothing at all!" said Karl, repressing his anger. "To prove it, you can ask her yourself. If I had only chosen, I could have had her long ago!"

"Braggart!"

"Liar!" cried the two listeners, simultaneously.

"Will you bet?" returned Karl, showing by the last flicker of the lamp an expression of insolence, which roused the indignation of the two, who, in their respective ways, loved the girl honorably. Then Karl laughed loudly, and added: "Believe it or not! And such a woman you want to marry!"

"I bet you *no!*" cried Gotthard, with fervor.

"I bet *not*, too!" added Wilhelm, quickly.

"How much? How much?" asked Karl.

"What you please!" returned Gotthard.

But as Karl named no sum and all became more composed, presently he said:

"Give me three months' time, and at the end, if she has a heart in her body, you will find me successful."

This speech was followed by an uproarious laugh, which sent a pang to the hearts of his companions.

They turned away from him with as much sadness as if they had just learned of a great misfortune to themselves or of the death of a beloved friend.

END OF PART FIRST.

PART SECOND

CHAPTER I.

Thus the winter passed away, bringing sadness to the formerly happy mistress and maid. After awhile it was difficult to determine which of the two was the more oppressed by the new order of things.

Whenever Frau Deik spoke kindly of Catherine in her nephew's presence, he immediately took occasion to disparage her without direct complaint. And when the old woman, influenced by his scorn, would declare that she must send the girl away, then he would increase in severity, so that she might not suspect his penchant for her. He would go on to affirm that Catherine did not know her proper place toward her weak mistress, but just let him marry, and he would show it to her very soon.

If now and then Frau Deik, incited by his representations, exercised coldness or unkindness toward the poor orphan, he would at once take the defensive and assert that the girl did wonderfully well, considering what an old witch grandmother had raised her. This idea he freely ventilated among the neighbors to accomplish the double purpose of frightening off Wilhelm from the girl and showing the *Bürgermeister* that a character such as he had no notion of marrying her, nor had Frau Deik the slightest intention of giving to a strange servant any part of his possessions. To thus destroy Herr Hoffman's hopes gave him peculiar delight.

These wiles and machinations in no way troubled the conscience of Karl Deik. He regarded them as legitimate, inasmuch as they were designed to protect his rights and to rule his aunt. Nor did he forget to meditate how he might win his bet. Catherine's manners toward him, however, were so different from those of his female acquaintances in Berlin that he had fears for his success.

Every glance he threw upon the girl filled him with admiration. She was beautiful, indeed—beautiful enough to turn his head. He could not keep his eyes from her when present, nor remove her image from his mind when absent. At night he dreamed about her. His feeling was mad, fierce passion, and being destitute of the tender element, angered him for its mastery over him. Beneath this emotion lay a deep scorn and contempt for the charmer. In former loves he had experienced pleasure, but this one only gave pain. When he thought he saw the girl show favor to his rival he was jealous ; when the contrary, he blamed her for fickleness.

He could not believe that his aunt's servant meant to rebuff him, and attributed her actions to desire to render herself more attractive through suspense and delay.

But how truly had the girl spoken when she declared that she hated all men! And she had good cause for her offense, since, with the exception of her guardian, the Mayor of Heisternest, and the pastor of Hela, all other men she had known had caused her trouble. In childhood Christian and his comrades had embittered her life and driven her to solitude, and when he played the part of defender the insult to her was not lessened. But since her removal to Hela the attentions of lovers had given her no peace or rest. She realized that for her men's love could not be as for other girls around her.

Many a time, when here and there she saw the *Bürger* maidens marry and take possession of their new homes, she thought how different was her lot. For often had Frau Deik, to destroy the childish superstitious ideas which she brought from the village, impressed her that she was born for poverty and servitude, and must expect disfavor from many on account of her grandmother's unpopularity, for her to forget it. Nor had the pastor, made solicitous for her welfare by her uncommon beauty, failed to quicken her native self-respect, or to warn her against men's attentions.

Full corroboration had been given to Frau Deik's assertion of the absurdity of her marrying Wilhelm or Gotthard by the cruel attack of the *Bürgermeister* and the uncordiality of the lighthouse-keeper's greeting.

But she did not desire nor receive their advances to her on better grounds. There was something in Wilhelm's mode of wooing that repelled instead of pleasing her. Nor did Gotthard's or any other's impress her as they would, had she felt herself in position to accept their admiration.

There were but two things in the wide world that the poor orphan could call her own—her honor and her good name—and these she vowed to preserve with utmost care.

The very efforts made to guide Catherine right was a mingled blessing and curse. Instead of making her humble, they made her proud. The expulsion of the superstitions of childhood brought about the belief that she was most singular in circumstances, and that there was a spot upon her which a righteous life must erase.

That person who in any way believes himself cut off from other mortals loses the right measure for everything, even his own wishes and feelings, and is given up to self-deception and errors.

Sometimes, when the alternate accusations and attentions of Karl made life dreadful to Catherine, she thought seriously of leaving Frau Deik and seeking other service. But where could she go? She knew that no one in the town would receive her, since she was a thorn to the flesh of all the women. She could not return to her native village, where her friends were no more numerous. Beyond these two places was the great unknown world, so longed for in innocent childhood, so dreaded in wise maturity. Fast on the determination to leave the house always came loving gratitude toward Frau Deik, and longing to remain with her to the last possible moment. When she saw how, from day to day, Karl set her aside and wasted her substance, and how things were growing from bad to worse, there seemed to her a kind of duty in remaining faithful to her best friend, if possible, to help or protect her from injustice.

Never had her mistress uttered a complaint against Karl to the girl, nor had the girl forgotten her position far enough to speak on the subject, until one night, when he sat gambling with his friends and the two had retired to their room. The old woman heaved a deep sigh, as she took off her kerchief and white *piqué* cap and covered her gray hair with its night covering of yellow cotton.

Catherine's sympathy was aroused, and she asked gently:

"What is the matter?"

"'What is the matter?' Why, nothing!" replied Frau Deik. But, in a few seconds, she resumed: "When a person is old and has lost his right powers, it is better for him to die!"

"But you have all of yours!" said the girl, consolingly. "You are active, eat heartily—"

"Do you think so?" interrupted the other. "I know better, for if I had my right powers—" she paused as if doubtful, but the desire to express her long pent-up feelings conquered, and she resumed, as if talking to herself—"I would not all this year have let things go out of my house against my will, nor allowed such conduct in my sitting-room as I abhor. Once—" again she ceased, and after some minutes returned to her soliloquy. "If my sainted husband only knew! He would never have permitted it, nor would I have permitted it then, either!"

The last sentence she said earnestly, as if to do herself justice.

"Don't permit it now!" cried Catherine, involuntarily, as she helped her mistress put on the jacket in which she slept.

Frau Deik either did not or pretended not to hear this remark, but silently got into bed and drew the curtains, although the light was extinguished. But sleep did not come to her eyelids. As the laughs and jests from the revelers came from time to time upon her ears, she sighed the more heavily and frequently.

At last Catherine, who could neither rest nor repress her sympathy, summoned courage to speak, and like every one who has long kept back his resentment, spoke more boldly than she intended.

"Dear mistress," she said, "I can no longer bear to see you treated so without expressing my feelings. Of course I do not speak of myself, for I am servant. But to see him act as if you were not here—to see him order and use things as if you were not mistress of the house, is dreadful! I have thought much about it, and want to go to the pastor and tell him how he treats me and you, who are mistress, but—"

"Don't you dare! Don't you dare!" cried Frau Deik, threateningly, as she rose in bed, threw aside the curtain and looked in the darkness toward the place where the girl lay. "You just wait and see what I do."

A pause ensued. Catherine did not understand what great wrong she had done to rouse her mistress's anger to such a pitch.

Frau Deik valued above everything else the good name of her family, and the girl had touched this sensitive spot. And, like other people of such foolish pride, though her heart was bitter and her complaints heavy against her nephew, she forgot her own example and even resentment when another and a servant dared to bring similar accusations. Her heart felt a bitterness toward the poor offender never before experienced, and for the first time she regretted having taken her under her roof.

Presently she said with cruel force :

"Catherine, you are mean and ungrateful. To think of the poverty and misery from which I rescued you for you to come and try to make a quarrel between my nephew and me ! I suppose your object is to get some of my property in order that you may marry the *Bürgermeister's* son !"

The girl seemed to be turned to stone during this unjust assault. She dared not essay defense of herself, for Frau Deik never allowed contradiction. There came over her mind the terror of the shipwreck from whom the last plank is taken.

Hot tears coursed down her cheeks, and emotion such as the drowning man's filled her heart. She felt that, as her mistress had deserted her, life was no longer worth living. As the old woman's anger rose, her accusations became more dreadful; but the sufferer silently bore all.

Next morning when Catherine rose and went to work, her mistress vouchsafed no remark to her, and although the girl knew her duties, it pained her not to hear the usual "Do this" and "Do that" from her. All nature seemed to be clothed in wintry darkness instead of warm sunshine to the sad orphan.

When Catherine had left the chamber, Frau Deik got up, and, instead of drinking her coffee as usual when dressed, placed it before the fire to await the tardy appearance of her nephew.

When that lazy fellow seated himself at the breakfast table and saw his aunt place herself opposite, he exclaimed, in surprise:

"Haven't you drunk your coffee yet?"

"No," returned Frau Deik. "I waited for you, because I have something to tell you. Things must be changed here—"

"Holy Father!" interrupted he, with sacrilegious tone. "Things must be changed, but not as you expect!"

Frau Deik, though provoked, controlled her feelings, and said, quite gently:

"I am not speaking of you, Karl—not of you, although I am overlooked here in my own house. I am not speaking of what you take from an old woman of that which will soon be your own—I say I am not speaking of that."

"It's well you don't!" was the surly reply of the nephew, while he cut off a slice of bread and covered it with butter as slowly as if it was the business of life.

The manner and words were too trying for Frau Deik's equanimity.

"Karl," she cried, as she hastily set down the blue-and-white cup lest her trembling hand should betray itself, "you will bring me prematurely to the grave. After I am dead, you can turn the house into a tavern and drink and frolic as you will. But as long as I live, I will not tell tales on you. He who cuts off his nose spoils his face, and I will never make my kinfolks the town-talk. I will bear anything you do to me, but never will I suffer the servant, Catherine, whom I as good as picked up off the street, to complain to the pastor of you, as she threatens."

"What the devil does the wench mean?" cried Karl, angrily, rising from the table.

"I thought you would feel it," resumed Frau Deik, "as I did yesterday when she complained of you and told me what I suffered from you. But I will have no one to dictate to me. I have never allowed anybody to dictate to me! I know very well what she wanted to do. Wilhelm and his mother have put the foolish notion in her head that, if she could make me fall out with you, she would get your property, and then she might marry Hoffmann. They would like well enough to get possession of this house, which the Deiks have owned since the town was built! But I'll let them see that Deiks and no others shall own it! May

God forgive you for your wrongs to me, Karl! In spite of them, here you shall dwell, and nobody else! But Catherine must go away right straight or—or I will die!"

She stopped, out of breath, and turned, expecting her nephew to continue the indignation against the girl.

But he stood silent and unmoved. Frau Deik viewed his figure in supreme surprise.

Suddenly he broke out into a loud, malevolent laugh, which gave his aunt anything but pleasure.

"What are you laughing at?" asked she.

"At Catherine's cunning!" he replied.

Then Frau Deik renewed her attack upon her servant, and desired to hear Karl's opinion as to disposing of her. But that person declined to express any ideas on the subject, and his indifference began to bring Frau Deik to her right senses. As her resentment evaporated with her words, she began to feel what a sin and wrong she had committed against the girl, and to wish she had been silent. But, alas, we canot recall the irrevocable past, and our words and deeds bring their results for weal or woe!

As a last resort to evoke Karl's opinion, she asked: "How shall we contrive to keep her silent?"

"She will not tell, depend upon it!" he answered decidedly. "And she shall go away if you wish it!"

With these words he left the room. Frau Deik remained in the place, where he left her a long while, burdened with a guilty conscience and heavy cares.

CHAPTER II.

Whenever there happens anything to mar or destroy the trust and peace of members of the same household, it is expected that there will be an immediate separation of the parties. But difficulties can be dealt with discreetly, like cracked pots, and thus last a long time.

And so it was with Frau Deik and Catherine. Many days succeeded the eventful night, without reference to the unfortunate affair. During this time Catherine took care to execute all her mistress commanded and leave no chance for complaint. Frau Deik, though she was not cordial as formerly, felt compunctions of conscience for her conduct, and more than once drew out from her chests articles of clothing and gave them to her servant.

Meanwhile, Karl kept quieter. He had fewer card-parties, drinkings and late hours, and once or twice even went fishing with the others. This made both women inclined to believe that their unpleasantness had at least brought good to him. But both were afraid to remain together long, lest what lay so heavy on each heart might involuntarily seek expression.

One Friday in the beginning of July some of the men went out very early, fishing, while others remained on shore till mid-day, busied with the nets and other preparations for the fish-haul.

With the latter party Karl went out in the afternoon on the sea.

Frau Deik had during the week gotten through with the washing, and put it carefully away in the chests and closets, and now took her accustomed seat on the green bench by the door and looked proudly toward the *Bürgermeister's* house and others, where all haste was being made to accomplish the same work before the return of the boats.

The time for the herring-catch had come—the most important of the year—during which all attention and efforts were directed toward the fish.

After a little, Catherine, who had finished her housework, came out with a plate of greens to dress for next day's dinner, and sat down, as usual, in the doorway.

"Give them to me," said her mistress.

"But what shall I do?" asked the girl.

"You can go and find some worms and herbs for the bird. He needs them," returned Frau Deik.

This was no unusual mission for the girl, but today she knew that her mistress only made excuse to get rid of her.

Frau Deik had owned for years this thrush, and gladly bought for it food, as on the sands of the vicinity it was difficult to obtain the greens and insects proper for it. But not seldom had Catherine gone out, as to-day, a long distance to procure them. She went in for a kerchief, in which to secure the food, and started from the door.

"Where are you going to get them?" asked Frau Deik.

"Near the old church," said the girl.

Since the fatal night neither said one word more than necessary to the other.

It was a brave deed to visit the old church so late in the day.

The ruins of the building centuries ago destroyed by fire were invested with shadows and uncanniness. Here and there rose piles of stones, over which the sands had blown. The wind had conveyed seeds of trees and grasses from the neighboring wood, hence a thick undergrowth covered the ground. The voice of nightbirds always came in mournful strains from the broken walls. Altogether it was a place avoided by all visitors after sundown, for the few bold men who passed later than this time saw sights of which they could not speak. But Catherine was accustomed to getting the bird's food from there, and felt none of the fears that characterized her neighbors concerning the lonely spot. Indeed, up to this time she had enjoyed the experience. She loved to be alone under God's free heaven, and recall the happy days she had spent as shepherdess in the woods. But to-day all was different. The disfavor of her mistress cast a shadow over all the world for her—even over nature's beauty. She walked along, scarcely knowing or caring for anything about her. A heavy load rested on her heart that forbade thought of past or future. It was such dejection as only one in her condition can realize.

Instead of walking quickly, as usual, her steps were slow, and the way seemed long. Her limbs ached from the arduous labors of the past week, and the thought of Frau Deik's laconic communications and Karl's officious glances hurt her more than physical weariness.

It was clear daylight when she reached her destination and sank down tired and sad upon one of the hillocks covered with grass and thistles. Here she sat a long time, and unconsciously and childishly amused herself by again and again burying her foot in the soft sand.

The seat was warm from the sun's rays when she sat down, but gradually the coldness of nature became apparent.

Here and there flew an insect from the thicket, or a bat emerged from a cleft in the wall. None of these things disturbed the girl's meditations, until a feeling of chilliness made itself felt, and gave indubitable sign of approaching night. Startled, she jumped up and hastily proceeded to seek the object of her expedition.

But the bird's food recalled the sad truth that her mistress loved the bird and did not care for her. A feeling of wild jealousy rushed into her heart, which she quickly repressed as unjust to the pretty thrush, who did no harm and sang so sweetly.

Love for the bird, which had been her joy and care since she came to Hela, gained the victory over her melancholy. It was a consolation to provide dainty bits for the only living thing in the house that was peaceful and happy.

In the search for worms and herbs, Catherine discovered the lilac-bushes filled with white flowers and, at their feet, the fragrant roots of camomile.

With forethought for the household needs, she began to pluck both the flowers and the camomile, knowing that they retain their best healing qualities by being gathered before midsummer, when they scatter their powder.

The sun was long down and the mist rising from the sea, when her kerchief was filled with the bird's food and she still gathered the attractive flowers. The more she possessed the more she desired, and only when she came within the lengthening shadows of the old ruins did she realize the late hour and the unpleasantness of her position. Fearfully she looked around her, and her quick ears caught every passing sound. She told herself that the one was a bat, another the wind rustling the leaves, but none the less did she feel alarm. With trembling hands she secured her bundle and prepared to leave. Suddenly she felt her presumption—her daring in remaining so late. She thought of her grandmother —of Mathes—of Pinor—of all the dead who might seek her in this lonely spot, and, as she quickly rose from her knees, she felt herself caught by the skirt.

Uttering a frightened cry, she freed herself from the twig and hastened a few steps forward. But she paused, rooted to the earth, by the unexpected sight of a man's figure in her way.

"Have I got you at last?" cried he, seizing her hand and trying to draw her to him.

There was no mistaking the figure or voice, and no ghostly visitor could have given the poor girl such terror.

"Precious! Where do you come from?" asked he, throwing his arm around her waist. "Did you hope to see me?"

"From the old church! From the old church!" ejaculated the girl, trying to free herself from the obnoxious embrace.

"'From the old church?'" he repeated. "Did you find a pastor there to complain to of me? Or did you ask your grandmother's spirit to wring my neck, as she used to do?"

"I gathered food for the bird! I plucked flowers! I sought herbs!" returned the victim in a voice of anguish.

Karl was greatly amused. In this unexpected meeting, both his liking and grudge against the girl could be satisfied. For many days he had almost given up hope of winning his bet. He knew that he must either subdue the girl or get her from his aunt's house. But this auspicious accident furnished the solution of all his cares, and both judgment and inclination united for the ruin of the girl.

He felt an inexpressible delight in hearing the hasty, anxious respiration and in feeling the quick heart-beats of his unwilling, struggling victim.

"You have gathered flowers and sought herbs, you say?" he went on scornfully. "In the twilight, that is not good."

Catherine knew not whether her words were credited or not, but each second her alarm grew greater. She felt herself drawn closer within his arms, and could only gasp:

"Leave me! Leave! I have always said I hated you and all other men! Let me go!"

"Let you go! Don't think me such a fool. Precious, I am glad to see you. Come! You love twilight, and I love you. Come, let 's sit down here—come—we are alone."

With these words, he sank down upon a hillock, still holding her by the waist.

The girl, availing herself of the freedom of her arms, tried to thrust him off, and uttered a loud cry for help.

Quickly he sprang up, seized her roughly, and laughingly drew her by his side.

"Silence, I tell you! You need not think any one will hear you, though," he added triumphantly after a little, "for I know no mortal is near, and I will not leave you now!"

But the cry was not in vain. Suddenly came the return near by from the side of the nearest village. The words "Here! Here!" fell like music on the ear of Catherine—like curses on the ear of Karl.

The disappointed wretch at once loosened his hold of the girl, and, rising from his seat, pulled her up, too.

One instant he stood irresolute, and then said coldly:

"Be sure to come home! And woe to you if you tell a mortal that I found you here in the twilight!"

The girl had neither inclination nor power to speak. She walked away, thankful for deliverance and forgetful of her bundles.

"Take your cursed things!' called the fellow after her, hastily giving her the two bundles.

Then he turned away and walked over the white sands, lighted by the first beams of the moon.

When Catherine reached home she had to bear the reproaches of Frau Deik for her tardiness. She excused herself on the plea of the number of flowers and roots, which were fatiguing to gather and required rest. Her paleness and whole appearance corroborated the statement, and her mistress accepted the apology.

When a half-hour had elapsed Karl came into the house, and, in Catherine's presence, said:

"There is something wrong about the old church. I did not want to believe it, as, in Berlin, such things are ridiculed, but this evening I heard a very singular thing."

"What?" asked Frau Deik.

"I was coming from the opposite side of it, having gone there to see if it was a good place for laying the nets. As I approached, I heard two or three loud calls for help. I am satisfied that they came from the old church. I answered quickly: 'Here! Here!' and ran as quickly as possible to the church. There I met another man who had heard the cry like myself, and there we stood, calling and looking around, without hearing or seeing a living being."

Frau Deik listened attentively, and turned to Catherine, with the question:

"Were you there, Catherine?"

"Were you there?" repeated Karl, with a sharp intonation, as he looked at her as if for the first time in his life.

The girl turned pale as death, and had to avert her eyes from his terrifying presence.

"Did you hear anything?" asked he, as quietly as his aunt could have done.

The girl silently left the room.

Frau Deik, remarking her strange conduct, said:

"Catherine returned late and seemed troubled by something. I wonder if she saw or heard anything?"

"Returned late!" said Karl, meaningly. "Who knows what she did see or hear? Her mouth may only be closed. Indeed, Christian—the man who met me—said that things were not here as they used to be. Something is wrong."

"What Christian do you mean? The son of the mayor?" said Frau Deik, to whom the name suggested other thoughts.

"Yes. He got back day before yesterday from a voyage to Brazil."

"Is he going again?" she asked.

"I believe so, but am not certain. Sometimes he speaks one way, sometimes another. He seems to be in trouble about something. He said the voice which cried for help seemed familiar to him, and he took it for a bad sign. He asked after Catherine, and told me how she shared her grandmother's power of telling when any one was going to die in the village. Once he said she told him that she had seen an old man who was dead appear at the window and call her grandmother away. Who knows but what she saw this evening has caused her strange conduct? Such things when once believed are never forgotten."

"Foolishness! All foolishness!" returned Frau Deik, wishing to sustain before her nephew the reputation for good sense which the pastor had given her. "It is a positive sin and shame to think of such things and—"

"Think or not think, just as you choose," interrupted Karl rudely, "but I have my eyes open! Something is wrong about Catherine. Wilhelm and Gotthard are dead in love with her, and even I, though she is a thorn in my—"

Frau Deik was all attention, and asked with great interest:

"What about you?"

"Nothing much," returned he. "The woman is a thorn in my flesh, and yet somehow I can't get her out of my head, day or night. And this is when she looks too innocent to count three, and will not receive the attention of anybody openly. But often I think there must be some one she favors, and when you said just now that she frequently went to the old church to gather herbs I had suspicions. What does she get?"

"Why, food for the bird, of course," retorted Frau Deik, though there was a certain uneasiness in her tone.

"Bird's food! Bird's food!" cried Karl, incredulously. "There are better places for that!"

The old woman did not reply to this. The man drank his beer and turned to leave the room, but as he caught the half-murmured words of his aunt, "Catherine always does go to the old church for the bird's food," he answered, ere he closed the door:

"Who knows what she seeks and finds there?"

CHAPTER III.

During the night the three inmates of the house were busy with thoughts, and sleep fled from their eyelids. But morning found them without determined conclusions.

Rash conclusions are the result of strong passion or of rapid reflection or of lively imagination, and characterize people who are accustomed to change of circumstances. But ignorant, country people, who have remained in the same place for generations, from father to son, show a kind of inertness of reflection or thought and a certain helplessness as to decision. Should the affairs of to-day be thrown out of their groove, they have no remedy prepared for the morrow.

Frau Deik and Karl were interested in getting rid of Catherine, but could lay no plan to accomplish their desire.

But the girl, herself, had decided to avail herself of the pastor's offer to help her to a new position when, by any cause, she wanted to leave her mistress, Frau Deik. The cause was now so great that she could not longer stay under the roof. She planned to seek him the following Sunday afternoon and, candidly, lay before him how Karl had prejudiced her mistress against her, and how, therefore, she wanted to go far away from Hela, where no one knew of her grandmother nor could reproach her with the poor woman's character. To suffer such injustice, as she did, made her wish for the arts attributed to her grandmother, by which she might revenge herself upon the persecutors; but, knowing this feeling to be sinful, she earnestly desired the pastor to aid her in getting far away from temptation.

Frau Deik was no less bent upon sending Catherine from her house, but her place was too important in the household to be left vacant. She thought of all the girls she could possibly get in her place and rejected them as unsuitable. One was too old—another too young—another too cunning—another too simple. She was bent upon not getting another pretty girl, though she hated ugly people in her sight! But all these considerations were least. Her greatest objection was to have a stranger enter the house and learn and tell about the relations of Karl and herself.

These things Catherine knew, but would not tell. Every drawer of the shop, saucepan of the kitchen or nail on the walls the girl knew also, and used to their right purpose with the overseeing eye of herself, and it would be long before her substitute could as completely relieve the mistress of the house of all responsibility and labor. Besides, the old woman was remorseful for charging Catherine with her grandmother's supposed arts, and the future of the orphan lay heavy on her heart. In her dire perplexity and trouble, she decided to seek advice from the pastor. She trusted that he would contrive some way to remove the girl from her house without exciting the wonder and gossip of the neighbors. No one must suspect the unpleasantness between her nephew and her servant, as the idea would be an impediment to Karl's procuring the proper wife among the *Bürger* girls and prevent Catherine's finding another situation. She was too proud to reveal to the pastor the thoughts Karl had put into her head about the girl's visits to the old church. Thereby would she have forfeited the high opinion entertained of her by the pastor and communicated to others by him. So she decided to interview him the following Sunday morning after church, and abide by his advice in the matter.

The time passed slowly away, meantime. She did not like to lose sight of either nephew or servant, and as her trust in both was destroyed, she felt, more keenly than ever before, the bitterness of her childless widowhood.

It could not be said that Karl was irresolute, but only baffled in the matter. He had spoken with truth when he told his aunt that Catherine had bewitched him. His impatient longing, his anger and vexation toward her were terrible. Add to these his anxiety to win his bet, his concern lest Frau Deik might relent and his fear lest the girl might reveal what he feared to be known, united in producing a bitterness of heart toward the girl, which daily grew stronger.

He vowed that, if he could not secure her for himself, he would keep her from his rivals; he swore that if she would not be his in the house of Frau Deik, she should leave Hela with such a character as to prevent the desire of any lover to follow her.

And yet he was puzzled how to accomplish his desire. He could not attack her honor without implicating himself, and to lose his standing in the town was the last thing he could bring himself to suffer. Nor could he find any fault with her discharge of domestic duties in his aunt's house.

In the midst of his meditations memory of the impression made upon Frau Deik's mind by his remarks about Catherine's secret arts came to him as a revelation. Along with this recurred the fortunate meeting with Christian near the old church, and his explanation of a ghost being the source of Catherine's cry for help. He seemed to see the way made clear for convicting his victim. But suddenly the unpleasant truth intruded itself that to substantiate his assertions he must cite some actual event, which he could not give. To gradually spread the report would not be possible, as thereby he must incur the opposition of both the pastor and his aunt, and gain a reputation for less enlightenment than befitted his three years' residence in Berlin.

So the day passed without a decision, and his state of mind was not improved by the frequent sight of Catherine. He could not bear her glances of scorn and misery, and feared always that she might speak against him. And withal her intensified beauty robbed him of his senses. The sight of her, coupled with the ill-humor of Frau Deik, made him so uncomfortable that he could not remain longer in the house. It was Saturday morning, the busiest day of the week in the trade, and Frau Deik after her nephew's departure sent Catherine to work in the garden, while she remained in the house. Every cottage possessed a small garden, and they lay side by side a short way from Hela.

The sun shone down quite hot in spite of the early hour of day, and groups of women were everywhere at their agricultural employments. Catherine, with her head covered by a white kerchief and a basket by her side, was kneeling and planting cabbages, when a shadow fell across the ground, and looking up, she saw before her a tall, stout sailor. He wore his varnished hat with careless ease on the back of his head, his neck bared and his neckcloth loose. He looked like a person who was thoroughly satisfied with himself, and yet he could not at this moment articulate a word. Catherine recognized him at once, and without an expression of surprise, or even rising from her knees, said:

"Where did you come from?"

"Just from home," he answered.

"How long have you been back?"

"Just three days. I wanted to see you and learn how you get on."

"You see how I get on!" returned the girl, bending again over the earth and proceeding to plant the cabbages, which must be finished before midday.

He watched her rapid work.

Both were silent, for their hearts were heavy. The illiterate, in times of great emotion and extreme necessity, feel the bitterness of the absence of language to express themselves, while the educated equally appreciate the privilege and use it for their relief.

Christian stood by the hedge, meditating what he should say, in vain. At last, Catherine asked:

"Where have you been all these years?"

"Yes," he replied, without answering her query, "I have been away four years!" Then he added quickly: "You have grown up entirely in the time!"

"That 's no wonder!" said Catherine. "But where have you been?"

This time he was led into the right line and, after a minute's hesitation, returned:

"'Where have I been?' I have been to England and Sweden, and to Brazil twice. During the time I spent one day at home. I had to hurry back, because we were loaded."

"Will you stay at home now?" she asked.

"My people will not hear of it."

She nodded her head as a sign that she thought this natural.

After another pause, he said:

"I am willing enough, but I ought to go in the army."

Catherine again looked up from her work and said:

"Why?"

The question seemed to embarrass him and, at the same time, her glance to bewitch, for, after a little, he said:

"Over there in Brazil they are all black, but not at all like you!"

She turned from him in silence. Neither was a child any longer, nor failed to understand each other's thoughts.

Christian, taking encouragement from her silence, moved along the fence toward the gate. But Catherine, guessing his purpose, cried:

"Stay out there!" and he obeyed.

Again a long silence ensued, broken, as before, by the girl's saying:

"When are you going back?"

"Not for some time," he replied.

Meanwhile, Catherine finished the planting, emptied the basket, wiped her hands on her apron, and gathered, from a neigboring bed, some salad for dinner. Then she left the garden, and no sooner had the gate closed behind her than Christian was by her side. Proximity seemed to give him courage. He walked by her, until out of hearing of the women in the gardens, and said abruptly:

"I only came here on your account. If you are tired of living with Frau Deik and want to come back to the village, I will give up the seafaring life. Trust me for the thing being carried through. If they will not receive me with you, they need not receive me at all, and I will make house and home be where you will. I don't ask any one to approve of me. I came here to-day only to see you, and you know it. Only tell me at once what you will answer."

This plain, honorable wooing surprised the girl. She looked into the earnest eyes of her lover, and his faith and love moved her.

This impression did not escape Christian's notice, and to strengthen it he said:

"No one shall ever do you harm in the village if you go back with me."

But this assurance produced a very different effect from what the young man hoped. The girl answered, with that passion which he had often seen her exhibit:

"To the village, never!"

He did not contradict her, for the discipline of the ship had taught him silence, besides her earnest tone and his difficulty of expression.

She knew that she had wounded him, but could not think how to mitigate the blow. When they had nearly reached the town he said:

"Catherine, consider!"

"I will never go back to the village," she repeated firmly.

"I mean well by you," said he earnestly.

"I believe it," she answered. "But I have always suffered for what I did not do. In the village I must be reproached for my grandmother, and here it is no better. Therefore I want to go far away from the island, where no one knows me. Nobody here likes me, and day by day I like the people less.

All confidence in me is destroyed, and I must leave!"

These words were spoken in a short, dry manner, as if the speaker had long been used to bear the suffering.

The young sailor came nearer and said in a voice of more emotion than formerly:

"But suppose I promise to keep everybody away from you?"

"Then the dead will come—grandmother, Mathes and I know not who else. Sometimes I don't know where my head is, or what's in it, and—" She suddenly broke off, as if recalled to prudence, and only after a pause resumed, with evident victory over herself: "You mean honorably by me, and I think would carry out your design. But when a woman promises to marry a man she must do so with heartiness and good will. That I cannot do. Just to think of it gives me dread. Sometimes I fear a curse rests upon me, because my grandmother liked no one and no one her."

Christian listened to her with silent wonder. But when the girl perceived what a strange impression her words made upon the young man, she was encouraged to continue in the same strain. The tendency was deeply rooted in her nature to talk of the mysteries of superstition. By her grandmother's teachings, the events of the previous evening and the reference to her own wrongs, her mind and tongue reverted to the subjects forbidden by the pastor and Frau Deik with a strange vehemence.

"If the dead do come back—and I believe they do, though the pastor does not think I saw Mathes that night—then I wish my grandmother would come back! Many a night I have lain in bed and called and wept for her, because there are some—there is one here—whom I want to punish for treating me ill!"

"Catherine, don't speak so!" begged Christian, trying by the sound of his voice to rid himself of the unpleasant influence of the girl's words.

"Why not?" she cried, with her cheeks blushing and eyes flashing. "Why not? I have nothing against you! Is any one a worm, to be trodden under foot without opposition? It is written in the Bible (and you and I have learned it): 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!' He who wrongs me I wish to harm, and, if wishing—"

Again she abruptly ceased, frightened by the vindictiveness of her own thoughts, and, turning to her companion, asked:

"Where will you go to enlist?"

"In the infantry at Dantzig!" he answered absently.

The two had reached the back door of Frau Deik's kitchen, and, stopping at the step, the lover said earnestly:

"Remember, I mean honorably by you! Will you or will you not?"

"I will not!" returned Catherine, quite as decidedly. "I wish to go far away from here! Leave me in peace! I will be glad to be alone! My grandmother was always alone, and she had peace!"

"God help you then!" cried Christian. "Karl Deik was right, and I am sorry I spoke to you thus. But I know you will remember me kindly, and that is something! Good-by!"

With these words he turned on his heel.

"Good-by!" called Catherine after him, and entered the kitchen.

A few steps from the door the young man paused and looked back. But there was nothing to reward his trouble.

Angry with all mankind as well as herself, the girl had hastily closed the door and gone to her work.

CHAPTER IV.

Next morning was Sunday, and nearly every one in Hela went to church. Catherine utilized the absence of Frau Deik to clean the house and dress herself for the intended afternoon visit to the pastor.

On the street no sounds were heard save the tones of the church organ and the occasional raising of windows in the various dwellings. It was a lovely day, when sea and land were bathed in golden light and grateful warmth. A few boats were lying on the beach, and some men were stationed on the projections of the land to watch for the expected fishing fleet. Two whole days had the scouts been at their posts without a sign of the desired sight, when suddenly, just as the pastor left the chancel, and the concluding hymn was begun, the loud cry of "They come! They come!" resounded at the church door, and was re-echoed by this and that one in the congregation.

Simultaneously, as if by enchantment, books were closed, singing stopped, and men and women hastened from the house toward their respective dwellings.

In a few seconds the organ was silent and the church closed, while outside life and excitement reigned. Men hastily exchanged their Sunday garments for work-clothes, and young and old partook of food prepared with utmost expedition and betook themselves to the beach.

Frau Deik and Karl left the house, the former for the pastor's home, the latter for the strand, and Catherine was directed to repair to the water as soon as she had washed up the dinner vessels.

It was one o'clock by the church clock when the girl turned from the door toward the sea. The sun had become obscured by heavy, gray clouds, and the air was sultry. No breeze was perceptible, and the water was smooth as glass. Thereby the moving, flashing line of herrings was visible on the surface of the sea. In wide circles flocks of seagulls shot above the nets, and now and then darted down to seize their prey of small fish. On the shore every one was waiting. The women sat in groups upon their tubs and buckets, and near by the *Bürgermeister*, the school-teacher and several other men exempt from service by age were jesting with a number of girls.

"Look there!" cried the *Bürgermeister*, who, when he pleased, could be agreeable enough. "Look there! Don't you see something swimming on the water?"

The girls mentioned the boats, the nets, the sea gulls and, finally, the men as the objects indicated, but the old man shook his head in negation.

"Look again!" he said. "Right so—now—Don't you see anything now?"

"No! No!" cried they in chorus.

"What a world! Such young folks without eyes!" laughed Herr Hoffmann. "See there! That means for many a marriage and cradle! We will have a good catch! Many herrings, many marriages, many children always go together in the mind."

He was first to laugh at his own wit, and the girls did not fail to follow.

One of the number—who was neither the youngest nor prettiest, and who was thought to have designs upon Wilhelm—stuck her arms under her blue apron, so as to resemble a child in swaddling clothes, and said scornfully:

"Some people here will marry well, for whom no herrings are caught, unless they are prevented. They know how to carry out their purpose—this or that."

During this speech she cast her eyes significantly upon Catherine, who was leaning against a post near by and looking toward the approaching boat.

The spiteful words did not escape the one for whom intended, and dryly and defiantly came the answer:

"If I could carry out my wish, certain people here should have a tail of a herring!"

The girl shrank before the scorn and anger of the look which accompanied these words.

"Who was thinking of you?" answered she. "And why do you take notice of what I say, when I don't attack you?"

Catherine opened her lips to reply, but restrained herself. The proximity of the boat, which should receive the first net, occupied the attention of every one, and prevented the thought of lesser things.

Already was the net raised by strong hands aloft, and breathless interest followed the industrious workers in skiffs around the boat. Shouts and cries resounded on the air when the whole burden of the net was safely deposited in the large receptacle prepared, and with quick strokes of oars the boats were landed.

Then, indeed, great haste and excitement prevailed. Every one wanted to take part in the disposition of this first haul, the largest gotten in many years. The capacious boat was full to the brim of silver-shining fish, and with deft fingers did the laborers fill their buckets to get the craft emptied for the next net. Pleasure beamed upon the countenances of young and old, as they disposed of the fortunate catch. Life and animation, jest and mirth characterized the scene. The *Bürgermeister's* wit found frequent response among the contented laborers. Meantime, no one noticed that the clouds had become thicker, the air more oppressive and the sea more like lead.

In a short time a second and third net were brought in and relieved of their rich freight of herrings. Only two more were yet expected—a large one, in which Frau Deik had interest, and a smaller one, the property of several other citizens. The people hoped most from these outmost boats, because of the position of the herring shoal. So Frau Deik placed herself nearest the water with others interested, and near her was the girl who had maliciously attacked Catherine. She was smiling complacently, because Wilhelm had addressed a few pleasant attentions to her. Pleasure makes the young jolly, and, in such times of excitement, many things are allowed inconsistent with quiet, every-day life. Thus, many agreeable fellows, in passing stole kisses or embraces from maidens without observation from elders or opposition from victims more than reproachful glances of the eye.

Wilhelm, Gotthard and even Christian were among the most conspicuous of such gallants. Their rough jokes and familiarities served as refreshment to hearts during active labors, as drinks of whisky revive weary bodies.

Only one of all the girls resented and repulsed the unseemly advances of the young men, and, naturally, her conduct aroused anger.

"Catherine has forsworn laughter!" cried Wilhelm to Gotthard, loud enough for her to hear him. "She is just like a fence-pole to us. But let Karl come, and I bet she will smile quickly enough!"

"Yes," replied Gotthard, carried away by jealousy; "he has applied his knowledge gained in Berlin to good purpose. But it would make her lover smile to think of her standing here with us so sad."

Frau Deik caught these words and looked around indignantly. Catherine noted her action, and, with the blood surging into her cheeks, exclaimed angrily:

"Neither Herr Deik nor any one of you has cause to smile when you think of me, as surely as there is a God in heaven or justice on earth!"

The forcible language in which her contradiction of the young men's declaration was clothed drew the notice of all bystanders to them, and was about to turn the popular tide against Wilhelm.

But this Frau Hoffman could not suffer.

"Hush your mouth," she cried, "and don't take the blessed Lord's name on your lips! If I ain't sharp, I never know what is happening! To think of your setting men to betting and looking all the time as innocent as a new-born babe!"

Catherine did not reply. She put the basket she carried on the ground, with a confused idea of the heavy disgrace brought upon her.

But Frau Deik was not the woman to stand this.

"Pray, Frau Hoffmann, of what do you accuse my servant?" she said.

"The distinguished Berlin gentleman should know," returned the other, delighted to have the opportunity of venting her spite against Frau Deik's nephew, who had caused her so much trouble.

"What do you mean?" angrily retorted Frau Deik. "Who has bet and about what? I *will* know what happens in my own house!"

"That shall not stay concealed," returned Frau Hoffman quickly. "They bet that—"

"Nothing at all!" put in Wilhelm. "Don't mind what mother says!"

"Look! They land!" cried Gotthard, almost simultaneously.

Thus the attention of all was turned from the dispute to the more important business of fishing.

But before the landing was made Catherine ran to the water's edge, tripped upon the plank laid from the boat to the shore, and pausing before Karl, said with passionate haste:

"You have spread a slander on me! You wish to bring me to shame! But take care lest I tell on you, and woe to you if I do!"

She could not have chosen a less favorable moment for her threat.

Karl was in the worst humor possible. The fish-haul had been, contrary to expectation, of the lightest nature, and the chagrin of the man was proportionately great. The girl who had before maligned Catherine, observing the two facts and her threatening action toward the man, hastened up and cried:

"Catherine has done it! She caused both boats to come back empty. The *Bürgermeister* and everybody else heard her wish us harm—both you and us—until our blood ran cold."

Just here Wilhelm and Gotthard came forward and demanded to know what had happened. But their manner, added to the girl's accusation, only served to lash to fury Karl's temper, already moved by the unfortunate catch and Catherine's public defiance.

With the demoniacal celerity with which under such excitement mortals review entangled affairs and seize upon the most striking and effective signs as the most desirable of all, he cried, as he aimed a blow at Catherine:

"Curse you! A witch, that makes all the men in town run after you for naught, and then comes here to spoil the fish catch! You shall—"

"Let her go!" cried Gotthard, trying to free the girl's arm from her enemy's strong grasp.

But Catherine exercised her own power to rid herself of persecutor and defender, and wildly shrieked:

"Dare none of you to touch me, or you shall see what will happen—what I will do! I can bear this no longer!"

CHAPTER V.

With these words she turned to the front of the boat and placed her foot upon the plank leading to the shore ere she knew that Karl was pursuing her. No sooner did she realize his proximity than she sprang into the water, which here was shallow and smooth. Quicker than a flash the man was beside her, and seized her by the arm. This unusual sight brought a crowd of spectators. Work was forgotten in the agreeable prospect of witnessing the orphan's discomfiture. Frau Deik was filled with indignation, but in vain called upon the two to return to the beach. Then she appealed to the *Bürgermeister* to restore quiet and peace by his authority. But just at this time that august person was superintending the unloading of the boats and excused himself from the requested exercise of his prerogative. The truth was that he knew this scandal would forever put an end to Wilhelm's hopes of marrying the girl, and he was indifferent to her otherwise.

As he did not check Karl's wrath, the noise and excitement became by degrees greater. Frau Hoffmann was loudly declaring that she had lóng believed things were not right with the girl; another was complaining that people had left work when a storm was brewing; a third that the catch was so cursed small: and everywhere arose cries and upbraidings. But, above all the confused sounds, the vindictive tones of Karl were heard:

"Have you, cursed witch, caused the small catch? Did you wish me ill-luck?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" cried Catherine, wildly and joyfully. "From the bottom of my heart and with all my power, I have bewitched you!"

These words were instantly followed by a triumphant glance and a clear, ringing laugh that sounded unearthly.

"Alas! Alas!" came in the voice of Christian from the crowd. "Catherine, calm yourself!"

The protest seemed but to increase the flame of defiance. As the crowd pressed harder upon her, she repeated with a happy light in her eyes:

"Yes, I have bewitched him! And now I need not be a worm for every one to trample under foot!"

"A witch! A witch!" resounded from many mouths at once.

Some wanted to attack—others to escape her. In the midst of the wild excitement, Wilhelm and Gotthard attempted to defend the victim of public wrath, but their action only made matters worse. Suddenly, Christian cried in a voice loud enough to override the questions and shrieks of the women:

"The trouble is with the necklace and earrings, which her grandmother bewitched! Tear them from her! She is honorable—she is good—she has done no harm!"

Hastily pressing through the crowd, he reached her side and snatched the coral chain from her neck. But as he attempted also to remove the earrings, Catherine, by a powerful effort, broke through the mass of humanity and ran like a maniac toward the town.

At this very instant, a flash of lightning illuminated the sky, and the waters of the sea were moved by the first demonstration of the imminent storm.

"Stop her! Stop her!" entreated Frau Deik, trying to follow herself, and fearful lest the unjust treatment might drive the girl to desperation.

Possessed by a similar alarm, Christian and Gotthard hastened after her, while Wilhelm was only kept back by his mother's strenuous efforts.

Frau Deik's entreaty was, however, understood very differently by the crowd of women and children from whom the victim had escaped; but, while they were summoned to make up for lost time in rapid labor, and while Karl was venting the rest of his passion in relating the many evidences he had observed of his aunt's servant being a witch, Catherine, followed by friends and enemies and greeted by rolls of thunder, accomplished the short distance to the town and reached the pastor's house.

The pastor had a visitor from Dantzig. This was a young officer whom he had once taught, and who had come to spend a few weeks with him for the renewal of pleasant associations, as well as the advantage of sea-bathing. Early in the afternoon the friends had walked on the beach to watch the novel sight of the fish business, but the threatening sky had soon driven them back. They now sat in the sitting-room of the pastor's wife, who had laid aside her sewing in order to watch with them the storm rising with such grandeur and fury over land and sea. The zigzag lightning, tearing the dark clouds, cast glints of light o'er the waters and revealed their rapidly increasing disturbance to corroborate the testimony of their booming sounds against the shores. They were speaking of the severity of the weather, in spite of which the fishermen must remain to secure the fish-catch, since they had not finished before its outbreak, when the latch of the front door was violently rattled, a frightened cry was heard in the hall, the room-door was thrown open, and Catherine fell breathless at the feet of the pastor's wife.

She was deathly pale, and her black hair fell flowing over her shoulders, her kerchief and comb being lost in the recent struggle and race. Her eyes glanced wildly around, and her lips moved without uttering a sound. A perfect picture of despair and discomfiture, the girl was none the less beautiful.

"Catherine, for God's sake, tell us what has happened!" cried the pastor.

"Get up! What 's the matter! Speak!" said his wife, almost simultaneously.

But before she could obey, a great noise was heard without, and the next instant several persons, among whom was Karl, regardless of the preacher's private rights, burst open the room-door.

"They come! They come!" gasped Catherine, and as she recognized her persecutor, she added, with vehemence: "Yes—yes! I bewitched him, and I thank the Lord that He has at last heard my prayer! Now do to me what you will!"

At once the pastor understood the whole affair, and turned to ask his wife to remove the girl from the room. But that trouble was unnecessary, as the young officer had already approached the girl, placed himself before her to protect her from molestation, and, as he saw she had fainted away, quietly raised and carried her into the adjoining room, whose door was opened by the sympathetic hostess.

No sooner was this done than the good pastor turned upon Karl, and demanded, with superior dignity, the meaning of his unseemly conduct.

Rapidly and confusedly, like every one who wants to make his cause good while under the influence of passion, he brought his complaints against Catherine.

He spoke of the evil reports concerning her grandmother, then of the poor fish-catch, and then of her bewitching him. He related how he and Wilhelm and Gotthard all wanted to marry the girl, but she had refused them with the declaration that she could not bear men in her sight. He knew, thereby, that she was not what was right, for a poor, upright girl—without relations or friends—was always thankful to God for a husband! People had always said that a woman who could not like men was in league with the devil, and to-day the thing had been proved by her declaring that she had bewitched the fish-catch. The nets had been a hundred-weight heavy—more like a whale was there than herrings—but when drawn up, they had been found nearly empty. He ended by declaring that Christian, of Heisternest, had said that she had inherited the bad characteristic from her grandmother along with the jewels, and he thought that the girl should be brought out and made to surrender them.

Before his angry complaint was finished, the strange officer reëntered the room, and, no sooner had it ended, than he said to the pastor:

"The girl is delirious, and cannot be soothed!"

Karl, thinking these words were meant to corroborate his plea, cried:

"Delirious or not, she is a witch! I am a soldier retired from service! I am a militia-man, and—"

"You, a soldier?" was the cutting reply. "And in such a moment you boast of yourself?"

Karl was struck by the manner and tone of the young man, betraying his rank and familiarity with giving military orders. But, gathering himself for defiance, he answered:

"Who are you, sir, to address me in this way?"

"I am an officer in the Fourth Infantry Regiment of Dantzig," was the quiet reply of the other, approaching him with a dignity not consistent with his youthful figure.

Karl was for an instant silenced, and involuntarily assumed proper posture. But realizing that his silence would imply acknowledgment of his guilt, he rashly and angrily said:

"I don't retract a single word, lieutenant, for lieutenant you are! Not a word! And I am not the only one who has declared this woman a witch. There stands Christian, who knew her in Heisternest as a child. All around are others who know it. If necessary, I might swear—"

"Mind what you say, Deik!" put in the pastor, earnestly.

But instead of the warning having the intended effect of silencing Karl, it only brought others to sustain his statement. A murmur of voices suddenly arose. This one brought a new accusation against the girl, that one a proof of her witchcraft, and soon many were demanding the summons of the offender to explain herself or else her deliverance to the court of justice of Putzig. One of the women was even so bold as to cry out that the witch should be thrown into the sea, and by her swimming prove that Satan aided her.

At this point Frau Deik appeared on the scene, and breathlessly fell on the nearest seat. She had walked too rapidly for her old limbs, and showed great fright and anxiety in her honest countenance.

"Where is she? Where is she?" cried she to the pastor, and as he indicated by a movement of the head, she folded her hands on her lap, drew a long breath and exclaimed: "God be thanked! And He is my witness—by my own word of honor—that Catherine was an honorable girl in my house. And whoever denies it—" (this was said with extreme emotion) "whoever undertakes to deny it, I here before his face tell him he has lied, even though he be my own flesh and blood!"

Karl tried to interrupt her, but she resolutely continued:

"Let me speak! I have borne from you silently enough—borne it because I didn't want other people to know our troubles. But not one single quiet hour have we had, neither I nor the poor girl, since you came home. And so sly have you been about it as to make me gradually distrust the girl, who never once gave me a contradiction. Catherine—"

"What of Catherine and me?" interrupted Karl, "and what have I done to—"

"Silence!" was the stern response. "What have you done to Catherine? You have annoyed her until she has appealed to me for help, and because I have not believed her, but sustained you, I have done her great wrong and helped you in sin. But now I know your purpose. You want to drive away the girl so that I will have no one to help me, and then take possession of my house and make me your servant. You think you will turn my home into a place for summer guests. But I 'll show you that I am alive and will have my way. And I know that my pastor will help me, and not suffer us to be trodden under foot—neither me nor Catherine."

To this harangue Karl gave direct excuses or denials, and returned to the recent witchcraft of Catherine as a diversion. As he called upon Gotthard and Christian to witness, and as Frau Deik continued to defend the girl on this line, the contention grew warm and excited. Others joined in the conversation and changed sides according to the nature of the accusation. The pastor found it very difficult to calm the heated minds, but these various expressions of feelings enabled him to complete the opinion based upon Karl's insolent charges and Christian's confirmation. And in the midst of his strenuous efforts to subdue this sudden frenzy of his people, the unpleasant truth pressed upon him that his years of labor to educate the people's characters had borne fruit too small to conquer the former weed of superstition. He must be content for the present to quiet them and send them home. He decided to keep Catherine for the present in his own house, where she would have the peace and quiet absolutely necessary for her health.

As the others were leaving, the good man held Karl back. The lieutenant, observing this wish for a private interview, turned to the door, but, on the threshold, he looked around and caught the eye of Karl Deik. Mutual hatred beamed in the two opposing faces.

When the pastor found himself alone with the *Bürger*, he walked up close to him, looked him sternly in the eyes, and said:

"I have kept you here, Herr Deik, to say that I have not failed to observe who was the fomenter of this disturbance." He paused an instant and resumed: "You do not believe in witchcraft, and you know very well that your aunt's servant had nothing to do with the fish-haul to-day. You must give me another reason for wishing the downfall of this woman? What has the girl done to harm you?"

Karl would gladly have treated the pastor's words with scornful silence or with insolent return, but his was a nature that fell helplessly before spiritual or mental superiority, and he could only ejaculate:

"Pastor, you know the saying, 'God for all, and every one for his own!' I could not have this homeless, friendless creature to come and get my inheritance from my aunt. I can and I will—"

"Stop!" interrupted the other. "I know and respect your aunt, and know her intentions as well as Catherine's. The one thought as little as the other of robbing you. Your aunt would never think of such a thing. And as you have not made answer to my question, 'What has Catherine done to harm you?' I ask you another. Mind me, Karl Deik: What have you done against her that you are so anxious for her ruin?"

The nobility and dignity of the good man's figure and voice were such as to cause the ex-soldier unwittingly to bow before him, as to a superior in military rank.

This action did not escape the pastor's notice, and he repeated, impressively:

"What have you done against her that you are so anxious for her ruin? Why have you taken a means as godless as shameful to common sense?" A long pause ensued. At last the pastor resumed: "You want to fill the island with new ways of making money. You want to lead your fellow-citizens to enlightenment and progress. Then why should you revive the criminal frenzy of superstition? Shame! You try to convict a woman of witchcraft because you could not lead her astray! And for that you rush into my house! For that you demand support from the guide of your spiritual interests!"

Karl turned deadly pale. He felt himself discovered, but desired to brave it out. He forced himself to encounter the gaze of his accuser, and opened his mouth to speak, but the words died on his lips.

An oath he would fain have uttered, but the pastor left him no time to frame it, had his insolence sufficed.

"Go home at once," commanded he, "and see that you at once quell the excitement you have raised! Catherine will remain here under my protection. And remember, Frau Deik, that I will hold you personally responsible if the present event is not to-day forever hushed. Mark that! Mark that, Herr Deik! Whatever more is necessary for the people I will do as my duty. Tell your aunt that I request an interview with her to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

With these words, he waved Karl toward the door, and himself left the room to seek Catherine.

CHAPTER VI.

The storm of nature was a fit symbol of the disturbance of minds in Hela, but the latter long outlasted the former. Men always see in an event which illustrates their long-concealed belief proof of the truth and justice of their ideas, and the impression made by it does not die as quickly as it should do.

In the pastor's home all was quiet. The poor girl had fallen into a feverish slumber, from which she from time to time roused up in alarm, as if still pursued in dreamland by her persecutors.

By her side sat the watchful, kind mistress of the house. Outside, in the small porch overlooking the garden, sat the pastor and his guest, discussing the recent sad event. Suddenly the form of a young sailor, respectfully touching his hat, crossed their vision.

Neither gentlemen having heard the footsteps of the visitor, his abrupt appearance at the corner of the house gave them a kind of shocked surprise, and it was an instant ere the pastor ejaculated:

"Who are you?"

"I am Christian, the son of the mayor of Heisternest, sir!" was the humble reply. "I see that you have forgotten me!"

"What do you want at this late hour?" asked the other, interested by the young man's unusual embarrassment.

"As I saw the garden gate open," answered Christian, evasively, "I thought I would come in and see if I could speak to—"

"Say what you want then!" returned the pastor, encouragingly.

"What I want?" was the still more hesitating reply. "I want nothing from you, sir! But I want —I want to see Catherine!"

"You cannot see her, because she is very sick," answered the pastor solemnly.

Christian stood silent an instant, and then said with feeling:

"Is she sick? Then, sir, I wish nothing more. No harm, pastor, and good-night."

With these words he stepped back and would have gone, but the pastor called him back. He remembered what part Christian had taken in the the day's transaction, and called upon him to give explanation of himself. Every word that the young sailor said proved both his strong attachment to the girl and the deep prejudice of the others against her.

While the conversation continued the pastor's wife came to the door and said:

"Catherine has roused up and is entirely delirious. I fear for her reason."

A slight cry of pain escaped from Christian's breast, which only the young lieutenant heard.

Bruno turned to him and said:

"Can not you go to Putzig and bring a physician? We must have one."

"Yes," eagerly replied the young sailor.

"Wait and take this note," called the pastor after him.

Christian stopped in the path, the pastor entered the house to write the note, and Bruno sat silent on the porch.

When the good preacher returned with the missive to be carried to the distant town of Putzig, the young officer asked:

"When do you expect to return?"

"Return?" was the surprised and sad response. "I cannot return, because I must take the shortest route to Dantzig."

Then he placed the letter in his breast-pocket and started off.

"Hold!" cried Bruno, seizing his purse. "Take this for travelling money."

"No! No! I will not!" said Christian firmly, shaking his head and hurrying away.

Bruno looked after him with a kind of embarrassment, for which he could not account to himself.

For the rest of the evening he was alone. The pastor found that Catherine's condition demanded the care of the servant as well as his wife, and he therefore took charge of domestic affairs. The night and the following day passed slowly away. Late in the afternoon the physician arrived. He pronounced the disease nervous fever, brought on by excessive emotion and terror, prescribed remedies, and directed the patient to be kept safe from any influence that might renew the trouble. As it was so late when he arrived, the doctor was invited to postpone his return to Putzig until next day.

Frau Deik, according to the pastor's request and her own desire to see Catherine, had arrived early in the morning, and divided the labors of watching the sick girl with the lady of the house. When the doctor came, she was sitting by the bed, and the pastor's wife was conversing with Bruno. Naturally, the subject was the unfortunate incident of the previous day, and when the physician declared the necessity for removing the girl from her former surroundings should she recover, quite a discussion arose as to the best plan of proceeding. The good woman thought it best to keep the orphan in her own house and guard her from intercourse with the Helans to a great extent. Her husband, while honoring this good intent, believed it was injudicious to hold the girl as a kind of prisoner within the house or garden, and feared that this quasi-concealment of her would nourish and foster the present superstitious feeling of the people. He judged the best action to be that of removing her into entirely new circumstances and far away from Hela, where her reputation was bad. The doctor's proposition to secure her a home in Putzig was not favored, because of the annual visits of the islanders to market, and at last Bruno, who had silently heard all opinions, said :

"What do you all think of my writing to Eveline of this affair?"

"Has your sister returned?" asked the pastor.

"Doubtless, as she generally keeps her word, and promised to reach Dantzig last Thursday," replied he.

"Well, dear Bruno, I think you will be doing a good deed if you tell your sister of this matter and thereby secure a home for the orphan," said his friend.

"Indeed, you will," added his wife. "I am certain that Catherine will make herself a treasure in any household. She is industrious, capable and honorable far beyond most servants. And then she is so grateful and affectionate. She clings to Frau Deik and to us with great ardor. I am convinced by her confession to me that the unhappy event of yesterday would have been prevented had she come, as she intended, to my husband and revealed her grievances. She blames herself very much for her conduct, and I tell you it was very different from her usual ways."

"How surprisingly beautiful was she when she burst into the room!" cried the young officer. "I was startled and mystified, but the sight of her brought up a whole line of romantic pictures in my mind, and my first thought was, shame on me for it, a wish for my sister to enjoy the pleasure I experienced."

The pastor smiled, but said solemnly:

"I know the practical sense and clear intelligence of the baroness, and that you can, if you wish to, be reflective enough; but, dear friend, neither she nor you have experienced the necessities of life nor have due respect for misfortune."

The young man seemed half hurt, half surprised by this remark; but, with the hearty submission befitting the former relation of scholar to teacher and the difference in their years, said:

"I receive the rebuke from you, because I realize that you are more or less right about the matter. But, in this particular case, I don't understand the application of the principle."

"I don't accuse you of anything more than a certain generous weakness—a kind of open-hearted feeling that prompts help to be given to sorrow in a single-handed rapid or rich way. This is nobly meant, but is done without that true knowledge of the real suffering, which most needs relief, and implies the personal exercise of effort on the part of the unfortunate. You wealthy people regard your assistance as a poetical thing—as a luxury—and not as an earnest, laborious act, and, therefore, your good deeds don't make you as happy as they should!"

Bruno felt the keen truth of the sentiment, but, instead of reply, earnestly he said:

"I assure you, my dear friend, that I have not prepared a poetical bliss for my *protegée*. I only meant that Eveline might take her into service, and full well I know, by my service to you as scholar, that the position will not be without hardness to her. But, at least, she can make a good living and be treated kindly."

In this way, the conversation about Catherine occupied the whole evening, though, once or twice, the pastor sought to digress upon the spiritual and mental condition of his parishioners.

When the circle broke up and separated for the night, Bruno, contrary to custom, could not persuade himself to go to bed.

He sat by the open widow and gazed out upon the sea. The air was fresh, and the moonbeams lighted the earth, revealing the outline of all objects. Now and then light-gray clouds swept over the disk of the moon, only to pass away and heighten the enchanting effect of the restored light. The odor of flowers scented the soft atmosphere, and not a sound was audible, save the blows of the waves on the shore and the rustling of the leaves on three beech-trees, which furnished grateful shade to the house.

The effect of the scene upon Bruno was most happy. He blessed the day on which he had thought of seeking this remote place, both for his restoration to physical and mental health. Intercourse with his old friends, quiet beauty of nature, peculiarity of customs of the people, all contributed to divert his mind and supplement the good effects of atmosphere and water. For it must be known that the young man's heart was more deeply wounded than his health was impaired. How could it be otherwise, when death had robbed him of his child-love and his cherished betrothed?

Many times had the cruel monster entered the circle of his friends. His mother's loss was the price paid for his entrance into life, and, before his tenth year, his father fell a victim to the same relentless fate. Therefore, the boy's rearing had been committed to a sister much older than himself. This dear sister Eveline had married a widower with an only child of four years, and thus the boy and girl whom chance threw into the same household grew up together and were affianced. Eight months had now passed since the lovely girl faded away and died, leaving her betrothed of twenty-three years and brightest anticipations stunned with grief and bereft of plans for the future. He was an officer in the army, as his father had been before him, but his design had been, on marriage, to leave the service and retire to a castle inherited from his mother.

Baron Rettfeld, Eveline's husband, had always preferred to reside there, and, after his death, the childless wife had bound up her future happiness in the union of the two children whom she had raised and their settlement on an estate connected with her happiest past.

Marian's death was a blow almost too heavy to be borne. The brother and sister grieved together and seemed to be nearer drawn to each other by mutual sympathy. They decided not to carry out their plan of changing residence, as Bruno could not bear the loneliness of the house, and Eveline had not strength to console him. So the officer retained his commission in the army, and his sister spent the winter with him in Danzig. They had only separated a short time before, when the baroness had made an excursion for health in one direction, and Bruno had preferred to visit his old friend and teacher in Hela. Only a few weeks later, they had appointed to meet, once more, in the sister's town home.

It was long past midnight when the young man still sat by the window, deep in thought. The intense peace of nature contrasted strongly with the recent passionate rashness shown by men. The whole scene of the previous day came vividly before his mind, chief of which was the image of the half-wild, terrified girl rushing into the room. Deep compassion for her misery filled his breast, and he honestly reflected how he might help her. But his mind again and again reverted to his sister as the only feasible rescue, and he laid himself to rest with the determination to apply to her. But his dreams were busy with the same subject as his waking thoughts.

Next morning early he sat down to compose the important document, and after a description of the affair, added:

"Thou wilt, perhaps, call me an enthusiast for saying that a fate like ours prepares us for sympathizing with the woes of others. All that was bound to us—thee and me—by the sweet ties of love and made our future hopes has been snatched away. If we try to console each other by the thought that life is creative and forms new joys and interests, the consolation is poor enough. But I am satisfied that thy practical benevolent nature sees something worthy of effort in bringing aid to a lovely, unfortunate being, in receiving into thy house what can seldom be found—a servant who will serve thee with heart as well as with hand. Please, dear Eveline, answer this at once, that I may make the necessary arrangement with the pastor's family for the girl ere I leave this place. Thine truly,

"BRUNO."

Unfortunately the baroness was detained by her journey, and the letter was forwarded from Dantzig to one place after another, never catching her, and thus Bruno lingered two weeks in Hela, ever awaiting a reply.

During this time Catherine progressed rapidly toward recovery. After the fever was allayed she grew better astonishingly fast, for natural vigor of youth conquered the weakness consequent upon disease. And it was hard to say which viewed her recovery more joyfully, the pastor's wife or Frau Deik, who regularly came to see her long after her assistance was needed. Both of them noticed that her eyes had lost their fire, her voice its sharpness, and an indefinable softness characterized her being, which could not be the sole effect of sickness.

One warm day at noon more than a fortnight after the terrible experience, Catherine and her kind hostess came out of the house upon the porch.

"Sit down on the bench," said the latter, "for you are still weak."

"No, not weak," returned the girl, attempting to stand. "I think that idleness has caused the trouble, and as soon as I go to work I will have all my strength."

But her trembling knees belied her words, and she unwillingly sat down opposite to her companion.

They had not been seated long before Bruno appeared on the path leading from the sea through the garden.

"The stranger!" exclaimed Catherine, with vis-

THE DOOR WAS THROWN OPEN, AND CATHERINE WAS ADMITTED.—*See Page* 238.

ible surprise and embarrassment, pressing close against the wall.

The lieutenant hastened to the porch, and scarcely had he touched it with his foot ere the girl came forward and kissed his hand.

This action was customary from servants to masters, and many a time before had he observed it with pleasure, but, from a maiden who was not in service in the house, it seemed an unnecessary submission, and he cried, almost offended:

"Child, what are you doing?"

Catherine looked at him with perplexity on her face, but, as if excusing herself, said:

"Nothing—nothing at all."

"I am glad to see you again," he replied kindly. "We all should thank God for preserving your life."

"Yes," she said, "if only I had a position—if only I can go in service!"

The young man, who had never before known anything of the life of laboring people, felt deeply touched to find the beautiful young creature's interest in living coupled with the condition of servitude. So he answered, consolingly:

"You will surely find friends and the home you desire."

Just here the pastor came up, and while the conversation was continued with him, Catherine kept her eyes fastened upon Bruno's face.

For the next few days the young man saw Catherine only occasionally. The pastor's wife had impressed upon her servant the Christian duty of being kind and pleasant to the orphan, and not to annoy her with curious questions. Meantime, she assigned to Catherine light duties in the kitchen and house. All of these services were performed with attention and skill, and showed the girl's desire to anticipate every want of her kind friends.

Toward the end of the third week the long-expected letter from Baroness Rettfeld arrived, and its contents were in accordance with Bruno's highest hopes. She said that she had returned to Dantzig and longed to welcome her brother home. She added that she had considered his request to take the "maid of Hela" in her service, and that she deserved no particular credit for complying, as her house-servant had committed offenses during her absence, justifying dismissal, and she preferred to get a substitute from the country, whom she could train.

This news was particularly gratifying to the pastor and his wife. They had feared that the baroness, out of deference to Bruno's request, would take Catherine without any regular employment, and they dreaded the effect of idleness upon her mind.

The good man hastened to summon her, and said joyfully:

"Catherine, you have gotten a place—a very good place!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed she, fervently, as she folded her hands over her breast, without asking where or what it would be.

Her trust in the judgment of her friends was beautiful to witness.

"You will remain with us ten or twelve days longer," added the pastor, "in order to get your wardrobe ready for the journey. Then we will find a way of sending you to Dantzig."

"To Dantzig!" was the joyful, surprised reply.

"Yes," returned he. "The baron has secured you a position with his sister."

The girl said nothing, but, with heightened color, rose and kissed the hands of her benefactors, beginning with the pastor and ending with Bruno.

The young man, as she turned to leave the room, asked:

"Do you want to go to Dantzig?"

"Oh, yes!" she replied. "I thank God for giving me the chance to leave here, if only I will be able to do my duty there!"

Bruno had expected a very different answer. He was rich, and did not understand the poor. He was like the prince, who asked idle questions, and like him, was surprised by the earnestness and plainness of the response. He had neither expected thanks from the girl nor any marked signs of gladness. He had imagined that she would experience some regret in the prospect of leaving the place and people she had so long known for new surroundings and men. But, like most benevolent persons, he was encouraged by the reception of his first kind offer to plan the best means of conveying her to Dantzig.

He proposed to convey her in the same boat with himself next day, inasmuch as it was not advisable for her to travel with the Helans going to the Dantzig market, but his offer was promptly declined by the pastor.

Then he urged upon his friends to accompany her to the city, and utilize the excuse for paying the long-promised visit to his sister and himself, but church duties and engagements prevented acceptance of the invitation.

But that evening when Frau Deik came in and heard the trouble, she at once offered to accompany Catherine to Putzig, when she might easily reach Dantzig by post-chaise without protection. And the young man's mind was immensely relieved.

Next morning, a short while before departure, Bruno and the pastor took a last walk together through the narrow street of Hela. As they passed Frau Deik's house, she came out and entered into conversation with them.

Her excuse was to find out the address of Baroness Rettfeld, but her real design was to relieve her burdened mind. She spoke of her sorrow over the imminent loss of Catherine, and declared that she could never fill her place in the household. She praised her for virtues and fidelity, and acknowledged the injustice she had inflicted upon her through the influence of another.

Bruno told her that the pastor would furnish travelling money and everything else necessary for Eveline's servant, and her spiritual guide promised to use all his authority and influence to restore Karl to the right way. As they turned to leave, the opposite door was opened, and out came the

Bürgermeister, Wilhelm and Karl. The two young men, with quick salutations, went off a little, while Herr Hoffmann approached the group.

Anxious to appear as well to a stranger as Frau Deik or the pastor, the last-named person put on his most magisterial air, and bowing politely, asked Bruno how he was pleased with Hela, and whether the bathing had benefited him.

When the lieutenant replied in a courtly manner that he was charmed with the place, the *Bürgermeister* said pompously :

"If the baron will kindly forget the recent disturbance he witnessed here, and he should, for mortals are prone to do wrong everywhere, in cities as well as country, I say if you will kindly overlook that little disturbance, you will acknowledge that Hela is a quiet, pleasant resort for bathers, and I can assure you that if they will come here they will be treated most kindly. This place was always quiet until Catherine came here."

"And the baron is going to take Catherine away," said Karl as if to Wilhelm, though his speech was perfectly audible to the rest.

Bruno turned quickly and eyed the fellow with surprise.

The pastor, observing the action and desirous of preventing his young friend from retorting, exclaimed :

"Remember, Herr Deik, that we have this girl under our protection and have not failed to find out who was the offender against her."

Karl shrugged his shoulders and said with his usual effrontery : " It was I, of course!" and then resumed conversation with Wilhelm as they walked off.

" Too hot-headed entirely !" said the *Bürgermeister*, pointing after Karl. " But," he continued apologetically, " he has a scheming head on his shoulders !"

" He will be my death !" cried Frau Deik, bitterly.

It was too much for her that the fellow had arrayed himself against her pastor's guest.

"That man is inexpressibly obnoxious to me," said Bruno to his friend, after they had bidden farewell to Frau Deik, "and I hope he may never more cross my path !"

CHAPTER VII.

It was almost dark when Catherine descended from the post-chaise in Dantzig and looked bewildered around the courtyard of the post building. And it was no wonder that her head was set swimming by her first ride in a vehicle. The journey had been filled with wonders and delights to her untutored mind. The rapid motion of the chaise, under which green meadows, large mowed fields, spreading trees, flocks of sheep, dwellings and avocations of men were seen, created an astonishment and suspense that overshadowed the sadness of parting from the pastor's household and Frau Deik. But no previous experience was comparable to her sensation at sight of the city of Dantzig. The narrow streets between lofty houses were intensified in proportion by the uncertain light. In childhood, she had heard of Dantzig being a fortified place, without understanding what that meant; now she seemed to know it meant a prison.

She thought that her mother had here lived, her father was killed here and she must here reside with a kind of oppression, and instinctively she looked up to the sky as the only direction of free space and possible escape.

For the last half of the journey she had been sole occupant of the chaise, and now and then her mind turned to her future destiny. The pastor's wife had told her that she would be called for at the station of the post, and, because she knew no one in Dantzig but the baron, she had innocently expected to meet him.

When some time elapsed after she had dismounted, and no mortal noticed either her or her small belongings, she began to feel surprise and anxiety. Every one who passed and cast a glance toward her roused hopes, quickly to be succeeded by disappointment.

Meantime, a neighboring clock struck eight, the sky became clouded, and a strong wind sprang up. And there she stood alone and more wretchedly forsaken than she had ever before felt. She asked herself again and again:

"Why did you come? Why did you leave Frau Deik, your best friend?"

Rapid, confused thoughts surged through her head. Her childish superstitions, the encounter near the old church, the afternoon on the Strand—all contributed to increase her discomfort.

Once more she felt Karl's rough hands, she feared the murmur of many accusing voices, she knew that Christian was snatching her precious earrings, and she was protecting them by flight.

Involuntarily she placed her hand upon them—the last, the only jewels she owned—but the realization of their safety failed to give her the accustomed comfort.

Finally a short, stout woman approached and looked around searchingly. Seeing the girl, she asked:

"Are you the maid of Hela, whom the Baroness Rettfeld expects?"

"Yes," returned Catherine, gladly.

"Ah," was the cross response, "why couldn't you have chosen better weather and hour of the day to come, instead of making me run about this time of night?" During this query she continued her investigation with her eyes, and asked, when unsuccessful: "Where is your baggage?"

Catherine replied by raising the small bundle in her arms and taking hold of the box, but as it was apparently too heavy for her, the woman summoned a porter, in commanding tones, and directed him to convey the box to the residence of the baroness. The man went ahead with his burden, and Catherine walked beside her escort through the streets, terrified by the rolling of vehicles and dazed by the illumination of the sidewalks.

It was quite a long way to the desired destination, and, at first, the emissary took care to impress Catherine with the magnitude of her goodness in coming for her through the wind and darkness. But, before the walk was ended, her interest conquered asperity, and she plied Catherine with many questions as to whose services she had left, why, and how she had come to the baroness. But the girl had been duly warned as to what she should reveal and what withhold, and her companion, despairing of gaining information, concluded to give some.

"All I have to say is," she added, "that if you are a good seamstress, washer, ironer and waiting-maid, you could not have a better place than with the baroness. I have lived with her twenty-five years—long before she married Baron Rettfeld—and though I don't do much now, I know my place in the house."

She paused, as if to hear a reply, but Catherine was too much affected by the catalogue of expected accomplishments to speak.

Then she went on:

"I can promise you a good home. But remember that you do not make noises about the house, for my mistress cannot allow them. You must always be quiet and well-dressed from morning till late at night. Many a time company stays till two or three o'clock at night. This will be right hard on you, who are used to country hours."

She walked on silently for a few minutes, and then resumed, as if in soliloquy:

"It is never right with these country servants, anyway. I have so often told my mistress that she could not make anything of them. And the more I see them the less I like them!"

With these last words, she turned upon Catherine and gave her a searching look from head to toe, so that the poor girl felt the flush of embarrassment cover her cheeks.

Her spirits were, each instant, growing lower. Questions flew through her mind which disturbed her, and could not find answer. What would happen if she was not acceptable? Would she be sent away? Whither? Could she learn? What chance would be given?

At this point, the stout companion paused before the residence of Baroness Rettfeld. Catherine glanced hastily up, and saw a large, old stone building, five stories high, looming skyward, and apparently much loftier than the tower of the church in Hela.

Eight marble steps led from the sidewalk to the balcony before the windows and door of the first story. The street lamps before the house gave a weird attraction to the green foliage of the two large linden-trees, whose roots were imbedded by the sidewalk

The impression of the scene upon Catherine, who had never before seen a city house, a linden, nor even an illuminated tree, was magical.

All the childish experiences of enchanting nature, the Christmas tree and the days in the woods—were vividly recalled. Meantime the old woman rang the bell, and Catherine followed her through the quickly opened door into a spacious, lofty hall, where a bright lamp illuminated the painted walls and carpeted stairway. Carving and pictures were abundant, and handsome, luxurious furniture that overpowered Catherine with wonder and pleasure.

"Ah, I see you have brought her, Frau Beier!" said the maid who had admitted them. "Our mistress has visitors now, and the girl must await her leisure, but she has ordered that you report to her."

Above in the reception-room Baroness Rettfeld was taking tea with her guests. She was a woman of forty years, and could still be called beautiful. No wrinkles disturbed the surface of her white brow, her blonde hair fell in ringlets over her shoulders, her lips wore a refined attraction, and her blue eyes possessed the mingled gentleness and strength that characterized her brother's. She was dressed in mourning, but with elegance and taste.

Near her on the sofa sat a very old lady, the widow of Regierungsrath Kahlbach, who had been a friend of her mother's. Opposite to this person sat her youngest son, a captain in the army and a bachelor of more than forty years. At his right was a young girl, the eldest grandchild of Frau Kahlbach, come to Dantzig to make her *entrée* into society.

The acquaintance of the two families had been long but not intimate. The baroness had little admiration for the old, scheming woman who, having failed in her effort to make a match between the captain and herself, was trying the same game on Bruno and her granddaughter Sophie. Her brother had no love for the dissolute Kahlbach. But neither was prepared to fall out with the mother's friend and her son, and so, as their acquaintance was kept up unwillingly, there was no true enjoyment in the intercourse.

It happened that the conversation was slowly dragging when Frau Beier entered the room, and, with the propriety of a well-trained servant, quietly came behind her chair and whispered:

"The maid of Hela has come."

"How does she look?" asked the baroness.

The servant shrugged her shoulders.

"Give her some supper," directed the mistress.

But, in spite of the shortness and quietness of the interview, the old lady had caught a few words, and said:

"Has a guest come?"

"Oh, no; it is only a servant whom I wrote for," was the polite answer.

"Where from?" persisted the other.

"From the country. My brother has been to visit his old teacher, in whose family there was an orphan girl desirous of coming to town, and, as I have had trouble with my house-maid, I thought I would try this one as substitute and train her as I wish."

"A servant from Hela!" cried the captain, scornfully. "A fit action for Bruno's philanthropy and your accommodation! A libel on your good sense for it, dear baroness!"

The hostess heard this remark with displeasure, and asked, with a warmth that struck her auditors:

"How do you know that the girl is from Hela?"

"Because that is where your brother went to bathe," answered the captain.

"I wonder if she is pretty?" put in his niece, with youthful awkwardness.

"Yes, I believe she is considered so," returned the baroness.

"How can you be so heroic as to restrain your curiosity to see her?" asked Frau Kahlbach.

"I am not very anxious," replied the other.

"But I am exceedingly curious," persisted the old lady.

"So am I," added her son.

"And I," echoed Sophie.

The baroness was very much annoyed by this turn of affairs. She tried politely to lead the conversation and interest elsewhere, but Frau Kahlbach was not to be foiled. At last she was constrained to ring for the maid to summon the newcomer.

This command seemed to put the visitors in best humor.

Sophie, who was not at all pretty, but was considered witty, said:

"I am satisfied that we will see a singular beauty—a mermaid. And, uncle, you should, like Ulysses, try to bind her."

"I think I am safe against the charms of a Helan!" replied the captain, who liked nothing better than being teased in spite of his forty years. Just here the door was thrown open, and Catherine was admitted.

The company looked from her to each other, in utter surprise. She no longer wore the kerchief nor the blue-linen costume of the islander.

Frau Deik had given her a new dress, which fitted closely around the neck and was made of black woolen cloth in deference to the mourning of her new mistress. Her hair was smoothly brushed and wound into a crown on the top of her head. She was both pale and confused. Pausing on the threshold and raising her dark eyes timidly toward the company, the majesty of her beauty and pathos of her situation moved the sympathy of the baroness powerfully.

The good woman hastened to meet her, and said with benevolent mien, while Catherine bent and kissed her hand:

"I am glad to see you, child. I need you and looked for you anxiously. Rest yourself to-night, and to-morrow I will see you again."

With these words she turned toward the company, intending for Catherine to retire. But the girl did not understand her command, and the captain, availing himself of her lingering, approached and said:

"How do you like the city?"

"I don't know anything of it," she answered confusedly and turned to leave the room. But on the threshold she met Bruno entering, and her joy on seeing him was quite as evident as his displeasure at finding her in his sister's circle of visitors.

"Why are you here?" he asked quickly and immediately turning to his sister added: "Eveline," why did you call her? Send her away!"

"I have just told her to retire," returned the baroness, and Catherine was not slow to obey.

After her departure, a kind of restraint fell upon the small company. The baroness felt that her brother was righteously displeased by the way her new maid was shown to her guests, and the surprised curious reception given the girl by them was more painful than voluble remarks on her would have been.

After a while, the captain laughed and said:

"I tell you, dear baroness, that if she is a specimen of Helan maids, I will go next summer and bring my mother one of them."

Bruno treated both the remark and its insinuating intimation with apparent equanimity.

"Yes," he replied, "the girl is very pretty, and my friends think much of her. They nursed her through a recent spell of nervous fever, and they tell me that before her sickness she was prettier than now. I have only known her since."

The tenor of this reply was such as to forbid further jesting on the subject, and the conversation turned upon other topics. But the baroness could not regain her usual sprightliness.

She was surprised by the unusual beauty of the new servant, and realized that the wonder of her present guests was but a forerunner of future discussion, when people heard that Bruno had brought her to the house. This thought annoyed her greatly, and she reflected how she might get rid of the girl without offending the pastor or brother. But no solution of the matter suggested itself, and, finally, the visitors departed.

Scarcely were the brother and sister alone before the baroness cried reproachfully:

"That girl is much too pretty for a servant!"

Almost simultaneously, Bruno said, as if thinking aloud:

"How could you call the poor thing up to satisfy the curiosity of impertinent people? If you had wanted to find the best means of making the girl's presence in the house a public talk, you could not have done better!"

Eveline felt the justice of her brother's reproach. She had already, within her heart, repented of the indiscretion. But the young man's earnest defense seemed to imply more interest in the servant than was natural, and created in her bosom a kind of distrust toward Catherine.

She was, however, fortunately for the girl, not the person to cherish hidden dislikes, and this prejudice was dissipated next morning, when she had opportunity to see and observe its object.

To the poor orphan, everything was strange and wonderful—the house—the broad steps—the rooms—the furniture—even the air she breathed.

She was ignorant of the duties she had to perform and of the lady she must serve. Had her heart been free from suspense, the baroness would have attracted instead of alarmed her. Eveline, wholly unconscious of her *protegée's* feelings, in order to accomplish her training best, decided to win her heart first, and kindly told her next morning that she was acquainted with her previous sad life, and intended to make her present one happy.

On the first evening of regular service, after Catherine had helped her to undress, she told her that she was smart and good enough, and only needed effort to do everything well. The soft, gentle tone of voice made a deep impression on the girl. No other mortal—save the pastor's wife during her severest sickness—had ever addressed her in such a manner. Great tears welled up to her eyes, and gratitude beamed in her face.

Eveline judged this to be the proper moment to make a designed speech. She began by saying that her fate had been a very hard one, that a kind of curse seemed to lie upon her, but that she might overcome it by doing her duty and trusting in God. She promised to give her all the help possible, to keep her in service, and to teach her what was desirable. She asked her to trust her fully and open her heart fully about past as well as future troubles. At the same time she warned her against revealing her past to others and finally advised her to try to forget it and live a new life.

Catherine listened respectfully to these words, so similar to the advice of the pastor of Hela. Both advisers failed to see that the command to forget the past must make a different impression upon the orphan of Hela than what was natural to their enlightened minds.

All night long the girl lay awake thinking over the solemn words of her mistress. The present advice to renounce all thoughts of the past made a different impression on her from that given when she entered Frau Deik's house as a child. Since then she had tried to do her duty faithfully and bear a clear conscience toward God and man, and yet the reproach of her former surroundings was brought against her. Of her whole sojourn in Hela she could only repent of the sin of wishing ill to her persecutors when maddened by maltreatment and terror. It was hard to be commanded by a stranger to forget Frau Deik, the pastor, his wife, Christian, Mathes, Pinor and her grandmother—all who had ever treated her well. Her mind reverted to a poor lark which she had found with a wounded leg one day and placed in the bird cage only to pine away and die. She felt that she was like the bird—caged and heartsore.

When the baroness had declared that a curse rested upon her life, the words had struck her like a heavy blow ; but now, in the silence and loneliness of her rooms, they came back to her heart as truthful, piercing arrows.

Next morning she arose with an aching head and cold limbs, and feared a return of sickness. But she did not complain of her feelings, and managed to fulfill the duties of the day. The baroness furnished her with abundance of employment, which proved a blessing.

Quick and skillful, she soon learned what was required of her, and performed it with quite the zeal that characterized her services to Frau Deik. But there was one difference.

Frau Deik was a woman of few words. She used to command and approve in sparing language, and Catherine was accustomed to her ways and fell into them fully.

The baroness, on the contrary, talked much, and the girl was surprised and constrained by her volubility.

The diligence with which she instructed her, the gentleness with which she chided, the zeal with which she praised, the care with which she restrained her from the rest of the domestics, gave the ignorant girl a kind of anxious care.

Gradually she acquired a distrust and fear of her mistress, without being able to give any cause for it. Her strict obedience to the order of associating and communicating as little as possible with her fellow-servants evoked their deep prejudice and ill-will. The isolation of village and of town life was not comparable to this, because she was so much more capable of feeling it now.

Besides this inner trouble, her new surroundings and avocations wrought another effect. In Hela she was used to working hard from morning till night, but in the free, fresh sea-air, now she sat almost the whole time sewing in a small room adjoining the bed-chamber of her mistress, and her only view comprised a court surrounded by lofty buildings, into which the sunlight seldom penetrated and darkness came early. Formerly she sank to rest gladly soon after dark; now, sleep would not visit her eyelids late at night. In the day she often experienced a painful longing for Frau Deik's garden and the sea.

She could not rid herself of the oppression produced by the gray walls shutting out the green woods bathed in golden sunlight and filled with humming-bees and singing birds. Loneliness and longing weighed upon her heart.

At night she went to bed and lay awake, listening with alert ears for the well-known roaring of the ocean or the wind of a rising storm. But no sounds were audible grander than the policeman's call or the rolling of vehicles.

When morning returned, she realized that the day must pass as all the preceding, with the same walls, the same employments, the same soft communications of the baroness, and the thought involuntarily followed that there could be no greater misfortune for her than the monotonous, easy, confined service of the city house.

Thus two weeks passed slowly away. Bruno had left Dantzig just after Catherine's arrival to attend with his regiment the maneuvers at Königsberg, and, by his absence, the house was unusually quiet. The baroness did not fail to observe that something was troubling Catherine. She also saw that she was each day becoming paler and thinner, but she attributed all to the influence of sad memories and strange, new surroundings, and believed she would soon grow better.

She was more than satisfied with Catherine's services. Her pleasure in her obedience was only equaled by her astonishment at her skill in needlework. And she (like others) learned to love the object which had so fully rewarded her labors. She had taken the girl in answer to the first request made by Bruno in a long time, and she had every cause to hope that in the orphan she had found the servant so long sought in vain.

About this time, there came a portrait-painter from the Residence to Dantzig. Bruno and Eveline did not possess a good likeness of the beloved Marian, and they—with several other persons—

employed the artist to come to their homes and paint her portrait and their own.

Immediately after arrival the painter came to the house of the baroness and proposed to begin her portrait. The question arose as to the proper costume for the picture, and Eveline, turning to Catherine, commanded her to bring certain garments that were spoken of.

The girl quickly returned and spread out the clothing upon chairs placed for them in a strong light. The baroness noticed that the artist was more busily engaged in examining the servant than the materials and colors of the clothing, and took occasion to send her away on an errand.

Hardly was Catherine out of hearing, before she laughingly said:

"Don't you think that head is worth your journey from the Residence, and that the permission to paint it would be sufficient compensation for the work you do for us?"

"Where did she come from?" asked the man, so carried away by the beauty of the servant as to forget to make the proper compliment to her mistress.

"From the peninsula of Hela," replied the baroness. "Her mother was a very pretty blonde, but her father was a Spaniard."

She felt the same pleasure in the interest shown by a celebrated painter in her servant's beauty, as the owner of a fine house, blooded horse or rare painting would feel when they are admired.

"You can have her to sit for her portrait after you have finished my brother's and my own," she generously added, without waiting for the request.

"Thanks, many thanks!" cried the painter. "Such harmonious perfection of exterior must indicate corresponding mental rarity."

This remark made a deep impression upon the baroness. Romance, which is active or slumbering in most women, and especially in those like Eveline who are called from youthful dreams to marriage with a much older man, and rearing of his child, roused up with mighty power. Poetry and fancy had always been nourished by her in opposition to her own prosy life.

Hence she had watched and sympathized with the attachment between her step-daughter and Bruno. She had deeply mourned over her untimely death. She had yielded to him all the poetry of life and given herself up to the practical. How poetical was it then for him to discover and bring to her this remarkable beauty, and how practical for her to train and develop her!

When once the idea of Catherine's being something unusual entered Eveline's head, it could not be dismissed. Though she had ordered the girl to forget the past, she found herself continually thinking of it. She persuaded herself that the orphan might have aristocratic, noble blood in her veins from her father's side. She decided that she would at once show her practical judgment by training her in more ways than before. But she would take care not to be over-zealous in the matter and betray her design to outsiders.

The first change made was merely to have the girl sit in the room with her and do her usual work. In her presence the management of the household, the practicing of music, reading, and even reception of visitors was done.

The mistress hoped and believed that these diversions would attract her servant, but at first there was no apparent effect. The same sadness and earnestness characterized her as at first. Only occasionally her expression of countenance indicated that surroundings were influencing her, and refinement gradually usurping the place of natural strength of mien.

The baroness, like all good teachers, was not impatient, and took courage for final success.

Six weeks passed away thus. Catherine had become thoroughly acquainted in the house, and her quiet, helpful ways about everything had somewhat reconciled the other servants to her presence. Even Frau Beier, the oracle of the kitchen, conceded that the new maid was competent far beyond most country girls.

Outside of the house, curiosity and discussion were active concerning her. Some of the lady-friends of the baroness were surprised and amused that she should take into service a girl wholly ignorant of her duties. Others were still more astonished that she should keep always near her a domestic whose beauty so far outshone her own. But both parties knew well the practical, sensible character of Eveline, and believed that she was acting advisedly in the matter. It was only among the less intimate acquaintances of the family that blame was cast upon the lady. There it was said that the tender, loving sister had only received Catherine in the house for her brother's sake. It was told that the beautiful girl had been found by Bruno on his travels and placed under the pastor's care until she was brought to Dantzig. Among the most diligent of the gossips were Frau Kahlbach and her children. That Bruno had loved Marian from childhood and was still mourning her death was reckoned as no contradiction nor hindrance to this belief.

It was not long before the maid of Hela was spoken of in all circles, so that the painter was informed of the various rumors as he went from place to place in his work. Fortunately, he was an elderly, worldly-wise man, who placed little value or credence upon gossip, and judged things simply and charitably. To him there could be nothing more simple and natural than that a lady should both have a pretty servant and desire her portrait to be taken. As he had lived long in Italy and seen much of the lower class of people, he understood how to approach the girl. He was always kind toward her, without showing particular notice, for she was in the room while the baroness sat for her picture. Gradually she took more interest in the conversation between her superiors, which being less rapid and connected than usually, was more within her comprehension.

Often the subject of discussion was the young baron, and Eveline represented him to the artist in colors of beautiful hues. She told how he had been left an orphan at ten years old, and how, thereby, he had become both brother, son and dearest friend to herself. She instanced many illustrations of fine traits given in childhood and youth. She described his betrothal to her step-daughter, his deep love for her, his high hopes of happiness with energetic sympathy. With equal sympathy, she told of his despairing sorrow over the corpse of his beloved.

The painter shuddered as he listened, and said consolingly:

"How hard has been the fate of this worthy young man! But I trust he will find consolation for his loss in new hopes and new bonds."

The baroness shook her head with a sad smile, which did not escape Catherine's observation.

After a pause she abruptly said:

"What you say about the future possibilities of my brother's life is natural to hope, but I do not believe in them because—" she hesitated, as if doubtful whether to proceed, but continued—"because he has no luck!"

"Are you so superstitious?" asked the painter, smiling.

"Call that not superstition which I might prove by my own experience and observation," she returned. "I firmly believe that some men are born for good luck, while others are not."

"That is in other words the unalterable destiny of humanity, is it?"

"In a certain sense, yes."

She ceased, as the artist made a sign for her to be quiet. He worked in silence for some time, but was evidently thinking all the while of the last remark of the baroness, for he resumed, with a suggestion of mockery in his tone:

"What do you think, then, of this destiny?"

"You have understood my remark otherwise than I intended, I think," was the answer. "You are seeing and making light of a supernatural power, while I, on the contrary, hold that our authorization for life depends mostly upon our own organisms. To receive present happiness implies fitness of the recipient. Not every mortal can seek, work for, seize and hold happiness. There are some to whom energy and striving make the struggle for happiness the same as happiness itself. But those who suffer instead of laboring, who receive instead of grasping, possess no bliss beyond what fate may offer. To this latter class my brother belongs, and therefore do I believe that he has no prospects for the future—that he is not born for happiness."

Neither Eveline nor the artist observed what an impression these words made upon Catherine—an impression the more hurtful because she could not comprehend their full meaning.

Frau Deik had always taught her that a man would reap what he sowed, and made his own happiness, while the pastor assured her that God would be her help in time of need, did she but do her duty. To contradict their words the baroness declared, what in her loneliness and forlornness she had secretly believed always, that some mortals were born for happiness and others were not. The former remark of Eveline—that there was a curse upon her—had taken deeper root in the orphan's mind than was good for her soul, and now she heard from the same lips that the noble young baron was not happy, but born for ill-luck like herself.

The thought of his misfortune evoked her deepest sympathy, while she felt consolation in knowing that she was not alone in misery. Constantly she meditated upon the similar curse that overshadowed them. The image of him as he first appeared in the pastor's house in Hela and delivered her from her persecutors was ever before her mind. As a savior—as a protector—stood he always in her thoughts. When a child, she had seen a picture in one of the schoolmaster's books representing a beautiful angel, with broad wings and flaming sword, protecting a man. All during her sickness had this angel seemed to hover over her head, wearing the countenance of Bruno. Many a night since had she dreamed of the visitor with the face and voice of her deliverer.

It seemed incredible that the superior being who had brought her to Dantzig for protection against her enemies should be subject to the same misfortune as herself.

During the first days of residence in the strange house, while her heart was bowed down with sadness, hope suggested that life would be better when Bruno returned to it. As in Hela, so on the first evening in Dantzig, he had been her guardian against the curiosity of Captain Kahlbach. How handsome and noble he was in his beautiful uniform and shining sword!

The captain, who came frequently to the house, was an object of constant repulsion and dread to her, and she tried never to meet him outside of her mistress's room. The revelation of the sorrow—the unhappiness—of the peerless baron filled her heart with indescribable sympathy and anxiety.

She could hardly await his return. Whenever one of his rooms was opened, she felt inclined to see if he were there. She decided to tell him how she had wished for his coming and dreamed of him. She imagined this and that spot as the probable place of meeting him. Many a time she mistook the rolling of a carriage or the fall of a footstep for his. In a word, she had never before thought so often and tenderly of any absent mortal.

At last the desired morning arrived. Unmistakable signs of an important arrival were seen. Rooms were carefully prepared, a sumptuous dinner ordered and pleasure beamed on every countenance. As usual, however, the painter arrived, and the baroness seated herself for the portrait.

The day was, contrary to many preceding it, cold and damp and the sky covered with gray clouds. The artist complained of the poor light for working. To Catherine, the penetrating atmosphere and the dark firmament were equally unnoticeable. Her thoughts were with her home by the sea. She heard, in imagination, the beloved roar of the water and felt the soft, fresh sea-breeze on her cheek.

Bright sunshine seemed to flood the world, and, as she raised her head from sewing to the heavy sky above, the sight could not quench the light in her eyes.

The night before she had dreamed of being alone in the pastor's garden, where she sat under the shady tree, rejoicing that neither Wilhelm, Gotthard, Karl nor Christian was near. She could not think, as she there rested, of her protector's countenance, of his voice, and, while she was striving to do so, lo, the garden vanished, and she sprang up in bed to realize the truth.

The noble baron was, like herself, resting under a curse. His sister had declared that in losing his betrothed he had lost all happiness in life. But in the midst of the sympathy, which this thought evoked, there rushed a kind of joy into her heart that, if he was unhappy she was also, and they were alike—alike!

As she raised, her eyes lighted by this thought, the door-bell rang quickly, and the baroness, joyfully crying: "It is he!" ran down the steps to greet her brother.

Catherine rose involuntarily and as suddenly reseated herself.

The painter asked her a question, which was unnoticed in the tension of her interest in the approaching footsteps. Her heart was beating loud enough to be heard.

"This is my brother!" cried the baroness, proudly presenting Bruno to the painter.

The usual civilities were exchanged. Then the young man observed his sister's portrait, admired the costume, the hands, the features and discussed them with the painter, without seeing the one who sat, as if nailed to her chair and cold as ice, listening to the conversation.

The baroness said that he looked badly, and he replied that the exposure of camp-life, combined with little rest, was the cause of it, but he would soon get well, resting at home with his sister.

And still he saw her not.

At last, the baroness asked:

"How does Catherine look? Hasn't she improved?"

As he turned toward her, she rose to receive him. The blood surged into her head and roared in her ears, while he took her hand and said, kindly:

"How are you, child?" And without awaiting a response, added: "Your mistress is right in saying you have improved. She gratified me by writing how well you do."

The condescending words were moving her to tears, and lest he might see them, she bent over and kissed his hand.

But her emotion did not escape Bruno's notice.

"Do you want anything?" he asked.

She could only shake her head in negation.

"She is thinking about home, I fear," said the baroness. "Go, Catherine, to your room!"

While she, in obedience to the command, was leaving the room, she heard the painter say:

"She has strong feelings." And, as she delayed an instant to close the door, in hopes of catching another glimpse of the newcomer, the same person added: "Beware of that dangerous creature!"

And the baroness laughed.

Frightened by both, she hastened to her room. Neither the words nor laughter were understood. Interpreting them as a complaint against her, she took courage and consolation only in her belief in Bruno's protection.

CHAPTER VIII.

The autumn day of the young baron's return was the anniversary of Marian's death.

As soon as the new year began, Baroness Rettfeld, believing it indispensable to furnish diversion for her brother, gave numerous invitations and entertainments. The presence of the painter furnished the desired excuse for them. It was important to offer to the distinguished artist from the Residence all the civilities of social life, and, thereby, her own pleasure and Bruno's good could be secured.

Scarcely a week passed without a grand dinner or party in the house. Naturally, the household labors were greatly increased, and Catherine was called upon to do various duties before untried.

Her activity and skill, combined with helpfulness, greatly diminished the prejudice of her fellow-servants, born of her reticence and the partiality of the baroness to her. The greatest complaint made against her now was that she was not dressed in the proper costume of maids, but after the style of ladies. The baroness had bought her clothing and directed the arrangement of her hair. Only one thing distinguished her from others—the large gold earrings of her mother.

Such a singular attraction did they give to her face that the painter requested the baroness to allow her to wear them when sitting for her portrait.

It was impossible for Catherine to escape the observation and remarks of the guests of Baroness Rettfeld, for as she assisted in waiting on the table at the grand banquets, they all learned to know her. Men, young and old, loved to have her serve them, and tried to keep her employed, but as she was accustomed in Hela to wait on Karl's friends, she performed their requests with quiet ease.

Of all the male visitors there was only one whom she disliked and strove to avoid.

One evening a large company was invited to a concert. Among the performers was a lady who had accidentally brought the wrong piece of music, and the right one must be gotten. The baroness, not being able to spare another servant, ordered the chambermaid to perform the errand.

When Catherine brought the message to the woman, she was busy arranging Bruno's bedchamber for the night, and made an impatient complaint of being interrupted. She declared that every minute of the day had been occupied with work, and asked Catherine to have the goodness to finish arranging the room for her in her absence.

The girl, impelled by her usual helpful inclination, and knowing that the baroness and her brother liked to find every duty done in the right way and time, consented.

The room was situated on the left hand of the entrance hall and opened on the so-called reception-room, where visitors laid aside their wrappings, and near the broad stairway leading to the parlors of the baroness.

Bruno was in the dressing-room, preparing for the company, when the servant entered the sleeping-apartment to turn down the bed, close the blinds and curtains and bring water and lights for the night.

She had almost finished the work when the baron opened the door of the room, dressed for the evening and holding a book in his hand.

He had been reading, and wanted to lay the book on the table by his bed to finish later.

Seeing Catherine he looked at her in surprise and asked:

"Why are you here?"

"My mistress sent Anna on an errand, and I am doing her duty."

"The duty might have been postponed," returned Bruno meaningly.

The girl, thinking he meant to complain of her work, said:

"I have done everything that she told me."

"No matter, then. I believe that you have done right," he answered. "But if you have finished go upstairs."

Quickly she raised the water-bucket, filled the pitcher and turned to leave the room. But, just then, the door-bell rang, and the first guest entered the reception-hall, and Catherine paused until he was ushered upstairs.

Meantime, Bruno missed a ring which he wore in memory of his betrothed, and thought he had laid it upon the washstand ; but, as it was not there and he was in a hurry, he called the girl to help him find it.

Thus, a few minutes were passed in the search, and when she, after success, left the room, there met her, face to face, the man of all on earth she dreaded most to see—Captain Kahlbach !

Although he was not intimate with the family, he was well acquainted with the arrangement of the house, and, casting upon Catherine a glance of surprise and disdain, he asked :

" Where did you come from ?"

Gladly would she have failed to answer him, but previous meetings had convinced her that such was not the quickest mode of obtaining release. So she replied shortly :

" I have been in here to fix the bedroom for the night !"

" Does the baroness occupy this floor ?" retorted the captain, sharply.

" No, sir, the baron does !" said the poor girl.

But as soon as the words left her lips, she realized that he had set a trap for her in his questions.

Blushing deeply, she attempted to pass on ; but he pressed so closely to her side as almost to touch her cheek with his stiff, red beard, and whispered :

" What is there between you and the lieutenant, who mourns the loss of his betrothed? There are other places where you—"

The door of the bedroom opened, and Bruno entered the hall. Captain Kahlbach turned toward him, and Catherine hastily ascended the stairs. Their actions clearly showing to Bruno what had happened, he came to the man's side, greeted him with cold politeness, and asked:

"What did you want, sir?"

The captain laughed insolently, and replied:

"I wanted to get a good look at and talk with that girl, but she is d——d shy!" Then he added, with a familiarity which his relation to Bruno did not justify: "You know Schiller says: 'The face of a pretty girl is like sunlight.'"

The host, mindful of the duties of his position, controlled his resentment, and, with a forced smile, returned:

"That is true of Wallenstein's Camp, but not of my sister's house, captain!"

The words did not fail, however, to anger his companion, for, while he answered pleasantly, the veins of his forehead were swollen and red, and he bit his lips under his mustache.

The interview thus ended, but the visitor thought himself observed by Bruno throughout the evening with no pleasant manner. Therefore, he could not enjoy the card-party as usual and took his departure early. The two men were filled with mutual animosity, without being able to give sufficient reason for the feeling.

After the captain's retirement, Bruno was abstracted and thoughtful. He saw how the beauty of Catherine seemed everywhere to bring her only trouble and insult. He reproached himself for having giving her so little notice while he had caused her coming into the house. It was true that he was apprised of her fidelity and capability as a servant and of his sister's training scheme. But he had never found out whether she was contented and happy in the strange, new home secured for her by him.

When the company departed, he followed Eveline into her cosy sitting-room, and related to her the accidental presence of Catherine in his room and the unpleasant meeting with Captain Kahlbach afterward. But the lady was summoned away by a servant to give some order, in the midst of the narrative, and while she was absent Catherine came in, bearing some clothing of the baroness in her arms.

Seeing Bruno, she hastened to his side, seized his right hand and, ere he could resist, kissed it twice with tenderness.

"Why, why do you so, child?" asked he in mingled surprise and emotion.

"I want to thank you!" she said.

"Thank me? For what?" he asked

"Because—because you have stood by me!" she answered, blushing crimson.

"If anybody has been too impertinent why haven't you, earlier, told me?" he cried.

"Oh, sir, that would not help me!" was the sad response, as she lowered her eyes.

Both the words and tone of voice affected the heart of Bruno.

"Who has dared to persecute you?" he said, while his blood boiled almost as if his sister had been offended.

"Alas!" she returned. "To make much of it only does harm. "But I knew that, in great need, you would help me, for Frau Deik has often said that the poor and the unhappy help each other."

"Are you then unhappy in this house?" asked Bruno, with increasing interest.

"No sir! The place has nothing to do with happiness, for we all bring it with us into the world, you as well as I."

"What do you say we bring into the world?" he returned breathlessly.

Catherine looked infinitely surprised at the question, and repeated:

"Happiness and unhappiness!"

"What put such a thought in your head?" he asked in wonder.

"Because you cannot bring back the lovely lady from the dead!" said she, with a sigh.

The reply was incomprehensible to the young man. All the answers to his questions meant so much more than he asked that they gave him a kind of shivering sensation, which showed itself on his countenance.

The girl, observing this shudder, and attributing it to grief for his lost love, said earnestly:

"If I could recall her to life with my death, how gladly would I do it!"

"Catherine, child!" ejaculated Bruno, with visible feeling.

"Yes, for there is no reason why I should live!" she added, as confirmation of her wish.

The young man knew not what to say or do, for such a development had never entered his mind. As he did not reply, the girl went quickly into the sleeping-room of her mistress, and he, fearing to meet his sister, sought the stillness of his own apartment. His heart was filled with strange emotions. He realized himself beloved by a beautiful, innocent creature, for whom he felt not the slightest return. He knew that one was ready and willing to sacrifice her life for him, whom he could never regard as other than the servant of his sister.

Bruno was a man of purest honor and self-control. Physical beauty, uncoupled with mental culture, had never awakened his love, and his sincere grief for his lost betrothed had, since that event, protected him from the attractions which her social equals had tried upon him. From the moment in which he had taken the poor orphan under his care, he had promised himself to be her constant defender. And, now, the discovery of her devoted, passionate love failed to give the self-satisfaction which such a tribute evokes from lower natures. On the contrary, he was filled with concern, because of the unconscious wrong he had done her, and tried to devise the best and kindest treatment for her case.

His first thought was to remove her from his proximity, but he could not seriously consider the cruelty of thrusting her off among strangers. To deliberately condemn her to a change of surroundings, which is the hardest part of the lot of domestics, he could not persuade himself. And, as his noble nature cherished the desire to benefit the one whom he had unwittingly wronged, and as he believed that he alone could do it, he decided to withhold the secret from his sister. Besides, he feared that Eveline's unnecessary zeal and watchfulness over the girl's actions might reveal to her that her tender heart's secret was discussed.

Above all, his delicacy of feeling recoiled from telling even to his own sister that he was beloved by a woman, from whom everything separated him. So he determined to keep silence.

Young, pure and honorable, he acted for the best, and trusted that his course would bring desired results.

By keeping the girl near him and taking more interest in her thoughts and doings, be believed that he could prove to her how far they were separated from each other by circumstances. Without arousing the suspicions of either sister or servants, he intended to speak to her oftener and more kindly, and the benevolent intention gave him contentment.

Meantime, he did not fear that the unusual beauty of the maiden might make an impression on his heart.

Next day, he began his training process by having the portrait of his deceased betrothed (which had hung veiled since her death in the boudoir of Eveline) uncovered. He wanted Catherine to see and know that his all was bound up with the dead.

To supplement its effect, he took occasion to tell her that the original had been his first, as she would be his last love. In this broad foundation he laid a well-concocted plan, whose results could scarcely be averted; but, unfortunately, it was destined to speedy interruption.

Only a few days after the portrait was unveiled, Bruno was taken sick. His ailment was treated by the physician, at first, as a trifling cold; but, hourly and daily, it increased, until it became a case interesting to the medical adviser and alarming to the friends of the sufferer. An obstinate remittent fever, coming on every night and lasting until noon of next day, brought deliriousness to its victim and anxiety to his sister. During the few hours of lucid sense, Bruno begged his sister not to grieve but to be patient and hope for his recovery. But with the shades of night come always sorrowful remembrances and terrifying dreams.

He stood once more by the dying bed of Marian. He saw her before him, beckoning him to follow; and he could not by all haste reach her. Sometimes he saw her flying over the beach, pursued and almost caught by Captain Kahlbach, and when he shot the wretch down with a gun, lo, it was not the captain but Karl, and, instead of Marian, Catherine fell, dead, in his arms, her hair encircled with myrtle wreath, just as his love's had been in the coffin. Then he cried loudly: "Catherine! Catherine!" and the servant, who watched by his bed, tried, in vain, to quiet him.

With that obstinacy which fever causes in its victims, he demanded the girl's presence, and the domestic was constrained to awaken her and make her take his place.

But when she entered the room the sick man had fallen into a light sleep, and her predecessor gladly resigned his seat by the bed and sought rest in the adjoining apartment.

Catherine was for the first time alone in the sick-chamber. Only now and then had she entered to bring this or that desired article to the baroness, and Bruno had only asked how she was, or thanked her for her kindness in doing so. But now she could stay—stay a long while—and it filled her heart with joy to be allowed to see and care for him.

She sat down with inexpressible thankfulness on the footstool which the baroness had lately used for her feet. The lamp burned low, giving a mysterious appearance to the bed. But she could make out the outlines of his noble, oval countenance, his brown, soft hair, his sunken cheeks and closed eyes.

The sight of his suffering sent a pang of anguish to her heart, while she was rejoiced to look at him, to hear him breathe, to be near him.

Awhile he lay quiet and then turned so that his face was hid. One hand fell from sheer weakness over the side of the bed, and its white, attenuated appearance struck her notice. She feared the hand was very hot, but she dared not touch it. But as all was so still she could not withstand the temptation to lay her cheek against it lightly.

That her action did not arouse him gave boldness. Looking around the room and toward the ante-chamber whither the servant had gone with caution, she softly took hold of it and pressed it once and again to her lips. Bruno stirred, and she sank back like a frightened deer. As he raised himself and looked about him, he recognized the girl, and said in extreme surprise :

" How did you come here ?"

" You sent for me," replied Catherine in alarm.

" I ? Sent for you ?" was the reply in the same tone of voice.

" Yes."

Her voice betrayed anxiety lest she should be sent away.

Bruno did not reply. He lay still watching his nurse. After a little he asked for water, and when she reached him the glass he leaned his head against her as she beat up the pillows.

The girl had never experienced such gladness before.

As Bruno lay back on his pillows he held out his hand to her and said kindly :

" Thank you ! I want you to stay, if you are not too worn out, for Wilhelm has watched much !"

Then he fell asleep again. Catherine watched through the dark, quiet night but, to her heart, there was light over all the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

From that time, Catherine shared the duty of nursing Bruno with the baroness and Wilhelm. As the patient grew better, he insisted upon Eveline's driving out more and more; and Wilhelm being her coachman, Catherine was left much with him. The young man utilized the opportunity to find out much of her former life, which the pastor had not known. Being weary of confinement and surroundings, it pleased him to hear her tell, in her simple fashion, of her grandmother, of her native village, of Frau Deik and other things. After a while, she would, of her own accord, begin, when she sat down with her sewing by the bed, because she saw that her recollections were entertaining. The oftener she related the more interesting she became to her listener. He saw, from her revelations, what a fanciful foundation lay under the impressions of her mind, and also understood the mistakes which he and others had made concerning her.

He had not supposed the girl to be so uncultured as she was, but her natural poetry of thought was remarkable in consideration of her origin and surroundings. The knowledge gained in childhood from the village schoolmaster was all that she had.

This reading and writing had been kept up by her duties to Frau Deik, and she seemed to have no inclination to learn more.

When he, one day, asked her whether she did not wish to get more learning, to his astonishment she replied.

"When I was small and foolish and imagined the wonders of my father's native land, I wanted to know where countries were and that one especially, so that I might go to it. But since I know that there were no relations to go to, and have here learned from the baroness what I ought to know and see more of people than I like, I believe it would make people laugh to see me try to learn."

And when he tried to make her understand what advantage it would be to her to learn, she answered decisively:

"Such things are not for me. I have to work, and nothing else suits my condition."

And straightway she would relate the simplest episodes out of her monotonous life with a vividness and power to which her scant vocabulary seemed to give aid rather than restraint.

"She is more entertaining to me than all the books in the world!" Bruno often told his sister when rehearsing to her these memories. "She interests without exciting me, and I am amused to find myself so fully taken up with such a narrow circle—with such great limitation."

He showed Eveline how impractical was her plan of educating the girl by allowing her to listen to such conversations as those of the painter and herself, and how unjust it was to force upon such a nature incomprehensible things.

He said that he was delighted because the girl had steadfastly refused to sit for her portrait. He asked his sister to be moved by his predilection and interest in so singular a nature to exhibit similar feelings toward her. He was certain that her fidelity and skill had made her acceptable to his sister, but her endurance and watchfulness over sickness rendered her invaluable. He added that a housekeeper, in such times when the relation between mistress and domestic was not close, could meet with nothing better than a servant whose highest ambition was to do her duty, and such exceptional conduct deserved a gradual amelioration of position.

Bruno indeed remembered poor Catherine's love for him, which treatment as a member of the family would render more dangerous, but he consoled himself with the conviction that he would never return it or would never take advantage of her and hoped that time and good sense would help her to conquer it.

There was only one thing that gave him misgivings concerning the success of his attempt, and that was the dark superstition of Catherine's mind that she was born for ill luck.

When the new year arrived, the invalid was well enough to drive out at midday, and, often, when he returned, he loved to sit on the stone gallery which ornamented the front of the house. Furnished with comfortable seats and fully shaded by the large, linden trees, this gallery was an inviting resting-place after riding in the sun. For the first time in these days of returning health, Bruno realized the pleasure of seeing the children playing on the pavements and the birds twittering in the trees, and pitied the inhabitants of Dantzig, whose houses were entered directly from the streets.

One day, he had taken a long ride with his sister, and, as she lingered on a business street to do some shopping, he returned and took his usual seat on the gallery. Catherine, who was sitting at the window near by, sewing, brought out a pillow for his back and returned to her work. The bench was very near to the window, and Bruno feeling refreshed by the ride exclaimed:

"What a beautiful day!"

"Yes, sir," said Catherine. "To-day is very fine, but how long will it last? The winter is not over yet!"

"That is your bad habit," replied Bruno, jestingly, "to make life bitter by borrowing trouble. Now it is lovely out, and I am well; and everybody ought to rejoice when he has a blessing. Whatever evil follows we must bear, but don't think of it before it comes!"

She only shook her head lightly, as if she did not understand him.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I was just thinking that if we knew what is fated to happen, what must come, we cannot forget it; and, when we think of it, we cannot rejoice."

"I don't understand you!" was the answer.

"I don't understand myself," returned she; "but since the weather has been so fine, my heart has been the heavier. And—and because everything is well with me—and because you, sir, have gotten well, I am always fearing something will happen still—something to you or the baroness!"

"What a singular idea!" cried Bruno, though he felt a secret unpleasant emotion during her speech.

"I can't explain it," she said simply. "I only know that I had a good mother and a grandmother, and both are dead. Frau Deik certainly meant well toward me, but what did it help? Death is in the world, and bad men are too many in the world, so that no one is certain of his life nor of his happiness. He whom it once sets its seal upon loses all his friends and bears every evil. People in cities and with many occupations do not notice it about others, but those who suffer know it well. Your sister, the baroness, said it about you long before you were taken sick."

Bruno had long desired an explanation of her mysterious words about his and her bringing their luck into the world, and now he knew that his sister's language had been misunderstood by the girl, and had strengthened her superstition. So he tried to explain the matter to her and soothe her fears, but the revelation of his sister's thoughts concerning him were not pleasant.

Catherine only replied with a sigh:

"I would gladly believe what you say if I did not have such bad dreams about you and the baroness."

Bruno laughed heartily and said:

"Tell me one of your dreams about a black cat or a loose tooth, which you think is a bad sign."

"Baron," she answered solemnly, "don't laugh. I have seen nothing in my dreams. I only heard the nails driven down on a coffin, as when my grandmother died, and I heard your sister weeping as she did while you were sick, and some one ordered me to carry the coffin to Hela, for it came from there."

"Who ordered you?" asked Bruno.

"I know not. I could not see him," she answered, "and that made it worse."

"Banish such foolishness from your mind!" cried Bruno, earnestly. But in spite of his words his spirits were affected by the girl's narrative, and cold chills ran down his back. To conceal this weakness he complained of the air becoming too cool, and went into his room. The memory of Catherine's dream lingered like a dark cloud upon his heart. He picked up a book to divert his mind, but found that he had finished it. He wandered aimlessly around the room for awhile, paused before his book-case and examined his store of reading. Not finding anything to suit him, he opened the door and asked Catherine to go to a neighboring book-store and bring a volume whose title he had previously given to the shop-keeper.

Immediately she laid aside her work, and, taking hat and wrap, repaired to the desired place. But a short time elapsed before she returned with the book and handed it to the baron. Noticing that her face was more heated and her manner more agitated than the short distance justified, he asked her why.

At first she did not reply, but to his repeated question said:

"I have had a fright."

"Who has frightened you?" asked Bruno, kindly.

Catherine, like people of her class, springing at once into the midst of here tale, returned:

"I knew that something would happen to me, for my dreams were not in vain. I have often thought how it would be if I ever met any one from my native village, or even from Hela, but I did not think of seeing Christian."

"Where did you meet him?" he asked.

'In the market! Just as I came from the side street to the long market. I came upon him with other soldiers. I recognized him at once, and wanted to get out of his way, for"—she hesitated—"since I—" She seemed to dread to speak out her thought, but finally said firmly: "For when I came into the pastor's house I saw him last."

Bruno understood and sympathized with her aversion to the subject, and replied quickly:

"Did he know you?"

"Yes, sir. I was only a few steps beyond him, when he called after me, and I turned around."

"What did he say?"

"He remarked upon my clothing, and wanted to know where I was going and where I lived."

"And did you tell him?" asked Bruno, with interest.

"Yes, sir. He said, when he was at leisure, he wanted to come to see me, but I told him that I could not receive him, as I never left my mistress's rooms except for an errand like the present. And he cannot soon get away, as he has, six weeks ago, entered the service of an officer.'

"What officer?"

"Captain Kahlbach," said she, coloring as she uttered the name. "And, when I wanted to go on, Christian detained me with his talk about home, and the captain came up and asked whom he talked with. Seeing me, and hearing Christian say that we were from the same village, he did not ask any more, but sent regards to you and the baroness." She turned away, leaving him troubled by the episode, especially by the meeting with Captain Kahlbach. Plainly moved by similar feelings, the girl lingered on the threshold, and asked timidly: "Shall I speak to Christian?"

"About what?"

"To ask him to be quiet and not tell the captain or any one else anything—I mean of Hela."

As she uttered the name her cheeks became dyed with the crimson of confusion.

"No, don't trouble yourself about it," answered Bruno. But, as she disappeared from sight, he called her back and said: "When Christian comes here, send him to me. You understand? Right to me."

That evening the young man discussed the recent event with his sister.

"It is a very fortunate chance," said Eveline, "that has made us the guardians of the girl. I could not, while you were sick, tell you how useful and dear Catherine has become to me, and her skill as nurse, combined with her attractive appearance, has shown her to be a treasure to you. But I believe that, when we took her into the house, we both betrayed a benevolent thoughtlessness that could be misconstrued. And I hear that people are casting insinuations against us on her account."

Bruno raised his face suddenly, and his brown eyes flashed resentment as he said, with a forced smile:

"Don't trouble yourself about my reputation, and it is silly to speak of yours in such a connection."

The baroness follcwed her brother's example and smiled. So close was the relation of the two that the sister feared the influence of his deference to her wishes, as his childish guardian was still resting upon him in responsible manhood, and quickly rejoined:

"Don't imagine, dear Bruno, that gossips hold me accountable for your actions! My brother's penchant for my maid I do not dream of hindering. But the love of my maid for my brother, who would not by any possibility think of marrying her (or even the appearance of such an unhappy feeling), is very different. I am responsible for Catherine, for the poor orphan taken into my home, and people say that you are her lover, Bruno!"

The young man, contrary to custom, laughed loudly and replied:

"What a pity it is that I am not a woman—not your sister!"

"Why so?" asked Eveline, surprised.

"You could then make fun of me without giving yourself concern of me!" was the answer. "But," he added seriously, "dear Eveline, I will relieve your mind. If you think it impractical for me to remain under the same roof with the poor creature, I will immediately go away, and you will keep her with you until I can secure a refuge for her."

The baroness was completely surprised by the young man's words.

"You care much for the girl!" she answered impressively.

"Very much!" returned Bruno, directly.

A pause ensued, during which both experienced emotions that they wished concealed.

"Bruno, what would you do if I dismissed Catherine?" asked the baroness at last.

"I would find some home for her in Dantzig, and see that she was cared for," he answered with feeling.

The baroness looked at him searchingly, and, with great effort, put the question:

"Do you love her?"

This softened the brother's heart.

"Don't trouble either yourself or me with cares so groundless, dear Eveline!" he said. "If I had never loved and lost Marian, I could not be enamored of a woman far below myself in culture, even were she prettier than Catherine and as good. But I have a sincere regard for the girl—I think much about her—I care for her (call it what you will), and I am determined to protect her from harm, as becomes a man of honor and humanity."

"But, is not this indiscretion?" returned the baroness, with apparent relief. "Is not—"

"Don't speak longer of it," he interrupted. "It is a fact. Catherine is my *protegée*, and nothing will alter it. Don't you believe my character and your reputation can stand against the gossip of those whom you are wont to despise as authorities? If you send Catherine away, I, alone, will take charge of her. But allow me to say that a woman's benevolence is worth little when she fears to aid the unfortunate, and does not assume the right to treat them according to her own convictions of duty."

The baroness was wavering. She loved her brother most tenderly, and took pride in his nobility of character, but now she found it hard to yield to his views.

"Bruno, you are turning the power you have so long held over me against our happiness," she said in tender reproach.

"Would you have it otherwise?" he asked, laughing softly. "Would you have me ruled by idle gossip? Do you want me to do a great wrong because some woman, who looks on me as a catch for her daughter, is jealous of the poor, forlorn orphan?"

"They are not only women who talk about you, but men," said Eveline, quickly. "Men. and such men—"

"Men who have a right to superintend my affairs will come to me and I will settle with them," interrupted Bruno, "but that does not alter your treatment toward Catherine."

With these words he rose to leave the room, and Eveline observed how vexed he was. For a long while she had conquered her judgment and inclination about warning her brother of current reports. Now she had done her duty, and as his conduct was unalterable, she asked:

"Do you think that I could get ready to leave in two weeks?"

"To go to your castle?"

"I thought I would like to go there for awhile if I could leave you so well as you are now."

"Will you take Catherine?" was the anxious query.

Eveline approached her brother and embraced him tenderly.

"Dear Bruno, trust my love to you," she said. "I have no one on earth to cherish but you, and all my actions are prompted by care for your good. How fervently do I long for your happiness! Believe that I am the same Eveline that watched over your childish life, and now, as then, will not yield an inch where injustice rises against you."

"I trust you fully," replied the young man in cheerful tones, as he pressed a kiss upon her brow and left the room.

CHAPTER X.

That same evening, while Christian was helping Captain Kahlbach to undress, that shrewd man asked him where and what he knew of Catherine.

The unsuspicious servant began by saying that he knew her under strange circumstances, and—partly to obey his master, partly from love of speaking about the girl—he told everything concerning her former relations. Naturally she was placed in the light of his own narrow impressions, but he did not conceal his lifelong attachment to her.

"If she only would have—or would, now—" Christian ceased, in confusion.

"Only would do what?" returned the captain, whose clever questions had revealed the simple fellow's heart.

"If she only would, captain!" repeated he. "It is true that I can not take her back to my home now; but this day—if she only would, sir. I don't know what I would do for joy!"

"Wasn't she willing?"

"I thought it was all over," continued Christian, as if soliloquizing. "But many a time, when I think of the possibility, I almost lose my senses. Now, she is again—"

He suddenly ceased and shook his head. He hardly knew what he was saying.

The captain, by way of helping him to expression, put in :

"You mean, now that you have seen her again, that you want to marry her."

Christian was one of those natures which do not like to give direct, quick replies. He hung up the uniform of his master on its appropriate peg in the wardrobe, took down the civilian dress from a nail on the wall, and, only when he was safely behind the captain's back, helping him with his coat, did he say :

"I cannot take her home. But if I go to see her again. I have thought about it all day. If I stay here in service it might happen."

Meantime, the captain had approached the table and examined the pistols which he had used the day before on the glass-ball shooting, to see if they had been properly cleaned. He took up one in his right hand, raised it aloft, clicked the trigger, and aimed it at the opposite wall. Then he laughed harshly and said :

"Foolish fellow, dismiss such a thought from your mind! The girl is not for you!"

Christian stood unmoved and regarded his master as if he did not comprehend his words. The other, seeming to regard his discomfiture as a good joke, repeated.

"I tell you she is not for you but for another!"

and added with the ugly familiarity which he often indulged toward his inferiors in position : "I say for another."

"Captain!" ejaculated Christian, but emotion choked further expression.

"You told me about the officer's Catharine, her mother; now, the daughter has followed her example. There are men in that house as well as here!"

"Captain!" repeated the other in a tone of pain, while he turned pale and grasped the table by which he stood.

"What 's the matter?" cried the master approaching him.

"Pardon, sir, it is nothing!" gasped the young man, though his looks denied his words.

"Drink cold water!" commanded he, and Christian left the room to obey.

When the man reached his own room he was overwhelmed with rage and grief. He snatched his saber from the wall, and bent over it with such force as to snap it in two. Then he picked up the pieces and flung them on the floor with utmost strength and shivered them anew. At last, completely unmanned, he threw himself upon the bed, buried his face in the pillows and sighed and groaned like a wounded animal. Thus he spent the entire night. Morning found him unrefreshed and melancholy. He dreaded the clear light of day as much as if *his* honor had been lost. He could not place his thoughts upon his duties. Captain Kahlbach, who had entirely forgotten Christian's emotion of the previous evening, paid no more than a momentary attention to his singular conduct.

There was one other person in Dantzig who slept little that night. Bruno's decision to interview Christian, founded upon Catherine's revelation, was strengthened by his sister's giving him the responsibility of managing her affairs. That night, as he lay awake and brooded over the matter, he concluded that it would be dangerous to trust to a mere chance of seeing Christian and giving him the desired warning. Early next morning, he sent a summons to him to appear at the earliest opportunity.

About mid-day the visitor entered Bruno's room. The grateful shade of the linden-trees was spread over the gallery, and a cool, refreshing breeze stirred their leaves, as Christian was ushered into the house. The apartment of the lieutenant was large and handsome. Lofty panels, browned by age, adorned the walls, and the ceiling was set off by the rich carving found in all houses of the nobility and equally indicative of riches and refinement. The harmony and massiveness of the furniture and curtains made a striking impression upon the eye. Bruno was seated by the table in a brilliant uniform, that fitly set off his handsome, noble countenance.

Christian had come from drill, burning with heat and covered with dust, to receive the command to visit the residence of Lieutenant Von Horst, but, burning from anger and scorn, he now stood before his hated enemy. He had several times before seen him on parade, but did not recognize him as a former acquaintance. But, in the subdued light of the handsome surroundings, he suddenly identified him as the stranger who had sat on the pastor's porch and offered him money to summon a physician to Catherine. A shudder ran over his frame, and he realized the cause of his trouble during the past night and day. He thought to himself how much better it would have been for the girl to have died, and he felt as if he could gladly murder the man before him. Possessed with such feelings, he gave the military salutation required, and stood silently by the door. Bruno, attributing his actions to embarrassment, moved a few steps toward him, and said:

"I have sent for you both to give you a piece of advice and to make a request of you." Christian did not move. "I recognize you as one of a brave company," continued Bruno, "and also as the sailor who went for the doctor to attend Catherine when I was staying at the pastor's house in Hela. She has since told me that you were raised together—that your father was her guardian and that you like her. If these things are so, I ask you not to speak to any one here of what happened to the girl in Hela. You are sure that she was innocent of the accusations brought against her, but if you tell them they will be used against her here. Take care!"

"And you?" asked Christian, still holding his position and looking at the lieutenant with vindictive glance.

"I am done," answered Bruno, who resented the fellow's manner, and believed that more was to be gotten from him by command than entreaty. But his opponent did not show any inclination to obey, and answered:

"Have the goodness to let me speak to her."

"What do you wish?" returned Bruno, with visible impatience.

"I want to hear from herself how she is, and what she wants from me!"

"She has already told you how she is, and what she wants from you, I have just told you. She begs you not to speak of her to others!" said Bruno, with an intonation of vexation in his voice, because he saw that his word was doubted by his subordinate, and he feared to rebuke him in such a critical moment. "If you have other request, make it!"

"Be so kind, lieutenant, as to let me see her," repeated the other with earnestness, "because I am the son of her guardian, and she wants something from me!"

Such obstinacy Bruno had not expected, and he replied firmly:

"You can and shall not speak to her, for you had part in what happened in Hela. If you want to tell about the poor's girl's past and have her discussed by every one, do so; but, if you are a man of honor and feel kindly toward her, keep silence."

Christian did not reply, and a pause of a few seconds ensued.

"I have nothing more to say, and you may go!

Only remember what I have said!" added Bruno, impressively.

Christian left the house in silence, but he was determined to see and speak to Catherine at any cost.

The lieutenant felt a great fear lest his design had fully failed, and looked forward with anxiety to the proposed departure of his sister to the country.

Meantime, Christian felt no rest. Every moment of leisure he had was spent lingering near the house of Baroness Rettfeld, in hopes of seeing Catherine. But many disappointments did he experience, since she seldom left the house and never worked on the first floor.

Finally, on the last Sunday the baroness intended to stay in Dantzig, he came once more into the street. The day had been unusually warm, all windows were raised, and many had walked or ridden out. Here and there sat maids upon the galleries, singly or in groups, who had been left in charge of houses, and wherever any of the other sex were mingled in the companies, mirth and enjoyment disturbed the otherwise quiet street.

More than an hour the young man watched before the dwelling of the baroness, and darkness had fallen ere the door was opened and the long-desired object stepped out and sat down upon the stone-bench nearest the lieutenant's window.

Christian had just before her appearance seen by his watch that his leave of absence was almost out, so he hastened to accost the girl.

She was alone in the house, as all the other servants had taken holiday, and her mistress had gone to pay a farewell visit to friends in a distant part of the city. It was because she was minutely expecting this lady's return that she sought the gallery so late.

Startled by Christian's salutation, her first impulse was to re-enter the house; but on second thoughts she exclaimed:

"It is good that you have come, because I have something on my heart to tell you. I—"

"No, nothing to tell me," he interrupted, passionately, "but I will tell you something, and you shall stand and defend yourself!"

"To you?" asked she, with a feeling of scorn rising in her breast akin to the sensation of childhood.

"Yes, to me," repeated he, trying to take her hand. "People say—they say that all is not right between you and the lieutenant."

"Christian!" gasped she, in protest.

"They say that all is not right between you and the lieutenant," repeated he, solemnly.

"Who? Who says it?" cried she in a voice full of anguish.

"That is all one to you who says it," he replied. "The point is is it true or false?"

"It is false—all false!" was the assurance, which bore such convincing truth in its tone as to alleviate the young man's anxiety.

In a much altered voice he asked:

"And is there nothing at all between you—between you and him?"

"CATHERINE, WILL YOU GO?"—*See Page* 313.

She opened her lips to reply, but could not speak. He waited as long as his patience lasted for her, and then said:

"How is it with you and the lieutenant, Catherine?"

Her battle with self was concluded, and victory won. With difficulty she replied in a short, dry way:

"Just as with you and me!"

"Just as with you and me?" was the astonished rejoinder.

"Yes," she returned firmly. "And now don't trouble me more. I know that he is my master and can never be other, but if I were to live a hundred years, and if he never were to know it, I can and never will forsake him. Now leave me and go away satisfied. My lot is no better than yours, but I ask no better. Good night!"

Christian stood as if nailed to the floor, and caught her by the arm to detain her. He felt as if he had received a heavy blow upon the head, and his senses were impaired thereby.

"Is this your last word?" he asked very slowly, as if to give her time to reflect. "Is this your last word?"

"I cannot help it, and I cannot lie," she said, while her voice trembled with emotion. "I have often thought how it would hurt you to hear it. I knew that you had not forgotten me and would help me now if I would ask it. But it is just so, and must stay through eternity so. For I was born to have ill-luck, and I cannot alter it."

"Then may God help you!" cried Christian, loosing his hold and walking away without looking back.

The girl did not know whether his words were intended for a blessing or a curse. Her knees trembled, and she fell back upon the seat.

But when the carriage drove up with the baroness and her brother, and they asked the usual question, "Has anything happened?" she could not summon courage to tell what was so painful, and answered:

"Nothing."

CHAPTER XI.

The departure of Baroness Rettfeld from Dantzig, instead of quelling gossip, gave fresh impetus to it. It was said that Bruno's sickness had been caused by his sister's opposition to his passion for her servant. Again it was remarked that, since the baroness had rewarded the girl's fidelity in nursing him beyond what was natural, it was evident that she was gradually paving the way for the marriage of the two. Her present visit to the castle was construed as made for the preparations incident to such an event, as it was conceded that now, as in Bruno's previous betrothal, he designed to live in the country. Already many were imagining "the maid of Hela," as she was scornfully called, as a lady and sister-in-law of the elegant baroness, whose singular condescension was alone attributable to blind love for her only brother.

And to this, a report began to circulate that Catherine had been driven from her former home for bad conduct, and this threw a suspicious light upon all former tales. Of course, the baroness, in her retirement, heard none of such rumors, and Bruno was not the kind of man to listen to them.

The person who shows unwillingness to listen hears little, but he cannot help forming disagreeable impressions from the actions of others.

No sooner had his sister and Catherine left than Bruno reëntered the service and returned to his usual mode of life.

But outside of service he held little intercourse with his comrades and without seeming to avoid any had few intimate acquaintances. Prior to his loss, he had been accustomed to dining or supping with this or that one in restaurants or (during his sister's absence) to repairing to coffee-houses, where he knew that his friends would be or come. But, since Marian's death, though he had seldom met with them, the misfortunes, which evoked the sympathy of the noblest of his comrades, made him an object of especial interest and attention. Now, he noticed a decided alteration of tone and manner toward him. When he entered a wonted resort the conversation of formal, cordial friends was stilted and cold, and, not unfrequently, his appearance brought a knowing smile to many faces. Mothers of marriageable daughters, who had before trusted their children to his escort most gladly, altered their demeanor, and young widows and girls who had been so much impressed with the duty of entertaining the unfortunate baron suddenly forgot to fulfill their obligations. But Bruno did not at first see the real cause of these changes. He could well see how his inveterate reserve might discourage or amuse his comrades, and he did not blame the women for tiring of so thankless an avocation as entertaining him. Soon, however, his better judgment decided that there was other reason for the various actions. Many small things tended to open his eyes to the truth. Two young ladies, who had been intimate friends of Marian's in childhood and were invited by the baroness to spend some weeks with her in the country, declined on the flimsy excuse of not being able to part from their mother. Another girl to whom Bruno said that he was going to pay a visit of a few days answered meaningly that he would not go to *Hela* this time. Lastly, he received a letter from the pastor of Hela, informing him that a Dantzig journalist had written to inquire of the *Bürgermeister* whether the current report was true—that a present servant of Baroness Rettfeld in Dantzig had been, a year or more before, driven from the town as a witch. The good man added that he had, by request of the *Bürgermeister*, replied that the episode was the result of hasty, ignorant superstition directed against an innocent, honorable girl, and that he deemed the wisest plan to be that of not noticing it in print. Notwithstanding this, two weeks later, the weekly newspaper of greatest merit brought out an article on the subject, entitled "Shameful Consequences of Superstition," whose author was the physician of the regiment and an intimate friend of Captain Kahlbach's. It was one of those cruel thrusts which are the more baneful because nothing is asserted but much insinuated, and the absence of names aided rather than prevented the identification of the chief actor with poor Catherine.

Soon after the appearance of the articles, Bruno repaired late one evening to a restaurant to eat an ice while he read the papers. A group of soldiers were sitting before the door on the gallery, but, as he felt no inclination to converse, he saluted and passed in.

He secured the papers and took a chair in the corner of the room. The window nearest to him happened to be open, and very soon two men of those outside separated themselves from the others, and evidently stood under the orifice as they conversed.

"What has he got to do with the cursed witch's story that he follows her so closely?" asked one.

"It is not the witch's story but the witch," returned the other. "You don't know him, if you think he will ever give up anything he has taken into his head. Now he has no other thought except the girl. Wherever he is he is troubled about her, and hence comes his aversion to—" Here he softly whispered Bruno's name.

The unwilling listener recognized the voices of the regiment physician and his brother, who was editor of the paper which published the unkind article.

"But what has the captain against him?" asked the journalist.

"Why, he is odious to him!" said the physician. "His opposite in everthing! But it is not only to the captain that the fellow displays his impertinences in that polite way of his! I might say that he acts as if he was made of superior material, and, if it must be, then—"

Here his voice was lowered so that no more words were audible, but there must have been something both insulting and amusing to evoke the laughter of his companion as it did. Bruno rose quickly and left the house by the rear door, which opened on another street, angered by the accident which had revealed the existence of an enemy and broken up the freedom of his actions. Thus he began to observe closely both the deeds and words of his comrades, and his distrust became strengthened. His position was clearly an unpleasant one. Heretofore valued by all as a man of honor and courage, he realized that secret dislike now existed because of the many jests, remarks and insinuations from the lips of former admirers, too trifling to notice or demand satisfaction for. But to a young man who had always enjoyed a position of honorable recognition and regard, these pricks of ill-will were doubly annoying. More than once he was on the point of resenting some indignity, but an instant's reflection decided him not to give his opponents the pleasure of seeing their object accomplished. He did not wish to bring himself into a position which would necessitate Catherine's banishment from his sister's house. He received the jests with proud self-control, and the victory over his feelings strengthened his determination not to interpret them otherwise than they were given. Had he never before taken interest in Catherine's fate, he would now have thought it due to his self-respect to protect her. And as every sacrifice made for one by another mortal binds them closer, so the covert attacks, which he bore for Catherine's sake, made her nearer and dearer to his heart.

In the retirement of country life, the baroness found the girl more lovable than before. Freed from the narrow city and the impertinence of men, Catherine resumed some of the liveliness and naturalness of old times. She executed all her duties with the same fidelity but more interest, and the baroness, being much alone with her, gradually depended upon her intercourse with her for pleasure. More than a year's residence under the same roof afforded many subjects of common interest.

The discussion of return to the city, of the many preparations for the coming winter, reminded Eveline of the days in which she prepared the castle for her brother and his bride. She once showed Catherine the bridal chamber, which had never been opened since Marian's death, and, when the girl wondered at its beauty, she said fervently:

"God grant that my brother may soon enter it!"

"Will the baron leave the city?" asked Catherine, with interest.

"Certainly, when he is married! I only wish it would soon come and give him some pleasure in life!" returned the mistress.

The girl did not immediately reply. At last, she asked:

"But if the baron takes a wife, what will you do?"

"What will I do?" said the baroness, surprised. "I don't understand you!"

"I mean that you would not have him to yourself," explained she.

"What does that matter, if he is happy—"

"I could not stand it!" cried the girl, so passionately that the baroness regarded her in astonishment.

"Are you then envious?" asked the mistress, in a jesting tone.

But Catherine was too much moved to observe the tone, and continued earnestly:

"At home I never noticed it, but since my coming to Dantzig I have often felt it, and I believe I must be envious."

"Envious? And of what?"

"Of everybody—but above all of Frau Beier.'

"What have you against the good woman?"

"If ever I did anything," answered she, "and you said that Frau Beier had done it better, I felt so anxious lest you would be angry and send me away. That was at first. But afterward, when the baron was taken sick and Wilhelm and Frau Beier were allowed to wait on him, while I could not, on my knees I have often gotten and prayed that I might see him as—because—" she hesitated as if bewildered, and scarcely knowing what she said, added—"and no one should envy me for it, because he is my friend."

The baroness did not reply, but cast such a searching glance upon the girl as to cause her to blush from embarrassment and turn away her head.

The discovery of Catherine's secret gave her the greatest surprise and trouble. But while she was debating whether she would reveal or conceal it, Bruno unexpectedly made his appearance. He had never before conquered his aversion to the place connected with his blighted hopes, and Eveline, in the midst of her joy, feared the effect of the spot upon his spirits. But contrary to expectation, he was cheerful and loquacious beyond what was natural.

He had conversed with his sister only a few moments before he inquired with singular vivacity after Catherine, and in his smile on learning that she was well lurked a mystery that alarmed her.

But she tried to repress the feeling, and related to him her impressions of the girl, ending with a warning to him against taking too much interest in her.

"The girl is warm-hearted, Bruno," she added, argumentatively, "and her gratitude to you has too much of the passionate character for her own good."

"I know it—have long known it," he answered, with that feeling which made all his words peculiar to-day.

"And you have concealed it from me?" asked Eveline, with reproach in her tone.

"I feared your interference and thought it best for us both for her to cling to me as she does, and me to return the feeling in a certain sense."

This was said in a tone which left the listener doubtful of his real emotion. She felt that he was altered in some way and would not bear contradiction, and she decided to wait and observe his demeanor.

When Catherine entered the room her manner toward the young man was as respectful and shrinking as ever. The only difference in her salutation was that, when he gave her his hand, she did not kiss it but held it, while he inquired after her health. But often, during the day, his eyes followed her movements with interest and, whenever he was near her, he made many inquiries about things that concerned her daily routine. These small events strengthened the uneasiness of Eveline about the state of his heart.

When the cool of the evening arrived, Bruno asked his sister to take a walk through the meadow with him. She gladly agreed, feeling both that the fresh air would alleviate her oppression and that her brother had some confidence to make. They had not proceeded far from the castle and Eveline was thinking how she could best open the conversation, when Bruno said:

"How strange is mortal life! Never did I feel the truth more forcibly than this moment! The last time I traversed this route it was by Marian's side, and every tree—every shrub reminded me of her. But a few days ago I would have thought it impossible to saunter here without deepest sorrow, but here I am, and, though I think of my lost love with tenderness, the edge of grief is broken by its remoteness from the present. Such is the tyrannical and powerful effect of time."

"You tell me that you are calmer concerning the past, but I observe that you are unusually moved about something to-day. What has happened?"

"My honor has been impugned," said he directly, "and I want your assistance in finding a way to defend it. I have come here to get your advice."

The baroness was dreadfully shocked, but as there was no time to be lost when a direct appeal was awaiting answer, she replied:

"What has happened that I can help you with?"

For an instant Bruno reflected, and then said:

"I have often spoken with you of the silly gossip concerning Catherine's residence in our house, and you, doubtless, remember the recent article I sent you, giving an account of her departure from Hela, in which truth and falsehood were so cleverly mixed as to deceive any one! But you and I both have always held ourselves superior to such meddlesome rumors and not attempted to contradict them. A few days ago, however, the colonel came up to me on the parade ground and, with his usual politeness, asked me to give him an interview as soon as possible. When I went, he first asked after you and your affairs here, and then if I had decided to retire to this place in the fall. I told him that the death of my betrothed had entirely altered my plans, and felt astonished that the colonel, who had formerly urged my remaining in service, showed no pleasure now to hear it. He hesitated a little, and added that he had no desire to meddle with the private affairs of his officers—that he had known me from childhood, and loved and honored you. Then he paused again, and brought out with a certain hardness that, if I wanted to remain in the regiment, I must drive

Catherine from the house; and, when I wished to protest, he cried:

"'Dear Bruno, take things as they are. You have done no great sin; for all of us have been young and seen charming women. The regiment does not contain a corps of saints by any means. But it is very improper for you to openly keep in your house a creature who was made so conspicuous in Hela, and whose history has been recently published in the Dantzig papers. It has aroused resentment, perhaps, among those who want to get your present position, and you would not like to have an *affaire d'honneur* about it!'"

The young man spoke quickly and passionately, and his sister listened with anxious suspense. When he paused, she hastily asked:

"What did you answer?"

"There was only one thing to answer," said he, regarding her quietly, "and that was that I would regard, as an *affaire d'honneur*, and defend to my best ability the freedom of my own business—that I would make it an *affaire d'honneur* to prevent my household matters from being interfered with by extraneous insolence and meanness!"

As Eveline did not reply, he continued:

"After that I told him how I met Catherine and brought her to you, and how good and honorable she is. I added that I would have procured her another home had I suspected what trouble her presence in yours would bring on her. But I assured him that I would not be induced by the soldiers' influence to cast her off. I told him that I would despise myself if I were to try to preserve my and your honor by following what I did not recognize as right. So, Eveline, the only question I have to ask you is whether, under the circumstances, you will dismiss the girl."

The baroness had become very sad, and answered after a slight pause:

"What a dreadful thing it is!"

"It is not agreeable," returned Bruno, consolingly, "but it has the merit of forcing us to a decision."

"You will have to suffer much for it," said she, with tender thought for his good.

"That may or may not be, but it has nothing to do with the question," he said simply. "The point is—shall Catherine go or stay? I must leave that decision to you to make first, and other things can be later considered."

"From whom has the report come?" asked Eveline, trying to postpone the momentous words.

"You know as much about it as I, dear Eveline," returned he. "And besides, it is of no consequence to know."

The baroness dreaded to speak openly what she felt. At last she said:

"If I dismiss Catherine now I will give support to the declarations of malice, though I affirm that she is honorable and virtuous. But—answer me this question, dear brother, plainly—are you sure of your feelings toward her?"

"What a question!" cried he.

"Don't you love her? Don't you think of marrying her?" she persisted.

Bruno's brow darkened as he replied:

"You almost drive me to do it! You almost compel me to protect her with my honorable name against the overwhelming storm of injustice."

"How little does a mortal know of the future!" exclaimed his sister. "Who would have thought that we were doing anything but the right—the good—in protecting the girl from the senseless superstitions of her enemies?"

"And was it not good and right?" asked Bruno solemnly. "Can it cease to be right because it has brought upon us disagreeable consequences, and we find it hard to hold to it?"

The baroness could not speak. A great struggle was going on within her heart. She saw and realized what would be the result of her approval of and aid to her brother's views. In her tender love for him, she trembled for his welfare. She dared not express her mental anxiety to the young man, lest she might confirm his will. But with the rapid instinct of her sex, she knew that the decision of the matter *must* be made by her. Should she leave her brother to settle the affairs of Catherine, both his and her honor would forthwith be the forfeit. But if she cast all the weight of her spotless reputation and worthy character in favor of the girl and of her brother, it was possible that the result would be for the desired end. The thought of helping her only brother gave relief from the momentary depression, and, with the gentleness that characterizes all female self-sacrifices, she replied:

"You are right, dear Bruno! I alone can render you assistance. I will soon return to Dantzig and bring Catherine with me. But she shall, hereafter, appear as my companion instead of servant. I intend to have her go in public with us, walking or driving, and thus prove that she is not your mistress. Everybody shall see that, and there are many friends to sustain our action."

As she read the deep gratitude of Bruno in his eyes, joy filled her breast that she had fulfilled his wishes. And ere they returned to the house, all plans were discussed for most speedily accomplishing the desired result. The baroness, as soon as she reached the city, would go shopping on market days and take the orphan with her—she would have her go riding with Bruno and herself and occupy the back seat with herself—she would send her to a clerical, learned man for instruction. (They confidently hoped that her hold upon dreams and superstitions was fast loosing under enlightening influences.) After a sojourn of some weeks in the city, she would take a journey and give the girl the advantage of seeing something of the world. She did not lose sight of the difficulties and embarrassments that would naturally follow such a novel course of action, but their annoyance would be endurable in consideration of the importance of the undertaking. Influenced by the power of such good intention, the sister and brother experienced earnest satisfaction and separated with the hope that all would end well.

CHAPTER XII.

Baroness Rettfeld kept her word about returning to the city. Early in August, just when the Dominik Fair opened, she reached Danzig.

This fair, which is known in West Prussia by the name of Dominik, draws an immense number of people from city and country, from high and low class, from far and near. The streets, gayly decked with rows of booths, scarcely afford standing room for their visitors, and mirth and life prevail. All public houses and many private ones are full to overflowing.

The third day of this gay festival is the most interesting of all, because it coincides with the regular weekly market day, and those who have brought things for sale remain to make purchases. On this particular occasion a heavy thunderstorm drove all into inns and shops for the entire morning, and only toward nightfall were the streets sufficiently dry to be reoccupied. The salesmen hastily reopened their wares of porcelain, glass and the thousand other articles usually displayed in markets.

About eight o'clock in the evening the baroness, with Bruno and Catherine, returned from a pleasure drive and descended from her vehicle before a linen-draper's booth to execute some small business. While the baroness was occupied, Bruno commenced a conversation with two lady acquaintances standing by, and Catherine was left to observe and admire the novel sights around her. As her eyes moved about, they fell upon Captain Kahlbach, who was standing in a group of military men near by, and, instantly realizing that he recognized her, she turned her back and pressed close to her mistress's side. But scarcely had she made the movement before a loud voice cried :

" Zounds, Catherine ! How did you come here ?"

Thare was no mistaking the drunken tones of Karl Deik, as he added ;

" Here she is (hiccough), here she is ! The (hiccough) officer's Catherine—the lady !"

He was leaning heavily upon Christian's arm and leering at her with blood-shot eyes.

All bystanders became attentive. The baroness hastily seized Catherine's arm and led her away, while Bruno placed himself between them and the drunken fellow.

" Carry him off !" he said to Christian. " Don't you see he can't stand up ?" Then turning to several other soldiers, he added : " Go, help to carry him !"

But Karl had recognized him and, forcing himself forward, exclaimed, with the shamelessness consistent with his condition :

"Carry whom, man? Whom, I say? We are no longer in the pastor's house! I have as much right here as you! And the witch—Catherine—the woman who has not been—who has not—"

Losing what he wanted to say, he reeled onward and, partly consciously, partly by accident, caught Bruno by the shoulder.

Trembling with indignation, the young man thrust him off.

Now, Christian, in spite of his anger against the lieutenant, attempted to fulfill his order.

But coercion only infuriated Karl, and curiosity having drawn together a crowd of observers, they pressed so closely upon the opponents that the drunken wretch gave Bruno a blow with his fist ere he could draw his sword to parry it.

With a low cry of anger, the lieutenant sprang back and unsheathed his weapon.

Fortunately a workman, known to him, pushed himself through the crowd and caught his arm, while he ejaculated:

"Lieutenant, lieutenant, calm yourself and reflect that the fellow is not responsible!"

Bruno unwillingly dropped his arm and slowly replaced his sword in its sheath.

His face was pale as death, and cold perspiration stood on his brow, for he realized what he had inflicted upon himself in heeding the appeal of humanity.

Meantime, several soldiers had come to the assistance of Christian, and no sooner had Bruno ordered them to convey the offender to the guard-house than Captain Kahlbach echoed the command.

To know that the hated captain was witness of the unfortunate difficulty intensified the lieutenant's chagrin, but, mastering his feelings, he turned toward him with remarkable equanimity, saying:

"You have been an eye-witness of this affair, sir, so have the kindness to accompany me to the colonel and give your evidence."

"With pleasure, dear friend," returned the captain. "But tell me what he has done to you, as I don't understand."

These words were spoken in a tone which struck Bruno as a new blow.

"Since you have ordered the drunken fellow to the guard-house, you certainly know why!" answered he, with forced calmness.

"True, true!" was the quick reply. "You should have knocked the scoundrel down at once! But I only want to know why he attacked you while with my servant?"

Bruno knew his enemy's purpose, and would gladly have refused to answer, but, as firmly as possible, rejoined:

"He insulted—"

"Your honored sister?" cried the captain, with hypocritical indignation.

"No! He insulted her maid!" answered Bruno, casting a glance of irrepressible scorn upon his interlocutor.

"Ah, indeed! I understand that the fellow spoke against the beautiful Catherine—a point on which you are easily moved!" was the rejoinder made with a wicked, insinuating smile.

This was too much for Bruno's endurance. He regarded his opponent with contempt and indignation, and said:

"To smile over the jeopardy of any man's honor is the act of a dishonorable creature!"

As Captain Kahlbach did not resent his attack, he quickly turned away and sought the colonel's quarters. Meantime, his enemy repaired to his dwelling.

Bruno felt that his position was most unpleasant. According to the decision of the military law, he believed that his honor would have been destroyed by having a witness of his degradation of his own rank to give him insult without the sequence of a duel. Therefore, he had striven to send back an accusation, which would call for a hand-to-hand settlement. But he was very uncertain whether the captain would take and resent the insult, as he intended him to do. Mind and heart were in a tumult of thought and feeling. He could not entertain the possibility of demanding dismission from the service with his honor undefended. And yet he feared to count on the colonel's keeping him there, and thus allowing the chance of a duel with Captain Kahlbach, because he had so lately refused that gentleman's request to dismiss Catherine from his sister's house.

In this way he reached his destination. The guard saluted as usual, but he shrank with the thought how soon this mark of respect would cease forever. So heavy was the burden of unhappiness and perplexity that he felt unable to meet the colonel. He turned and continued up the street. Soon he reached the wharf, where he spent some time pacing backward and forward and revolving his course of action. He must be most decided before appealing to his superior officer—a man of honor—to whom any ambiguity or mistake of evidence would be most unpleasant.

The atmosphere, in consequence of the morning's storm, was cool and refreshing and contributed toward his restoration to self-mastery and reflection. When he once more stood on the colonel's threshold all trace of his late mental disturbance was removed. The officer granted him an immediate audience, and listened with apparent suspense to the terse and dry narration of the recent affair. To the watchful eye of Bruno, his sympathy was only equaled by his satisfaction on hearing the young man's earnest request for his intercession in order to effect a duel, which alone could atone for the insults so publicly and mutually bandied.

When Bruno thanked him with undisguised joy for his promise, he replied:

"I am only doing my duty toward one who long ago earned my esteem. I am only fulfilling what friendship for you and your family demanded. Meanwhile, if you had given more heed to my kindly advice—if you had followed it attentively—you would not now be in this unpleasant position. And I must warn you that in consideration of the alleged cause of this trouble you will not be so blameless or innocent with your comrades as I could wish. But count on me, at least. Count surely on my help, just as I count on your removing the cause of the scandal if the affair terminates right."

With the last words the colonel pressed Bruno's hand warmly in token of farewell, and the visitor withdrew.

The concluding remark of his friend produced a new disturbance of mind. For during the expression of reproach and insinuation against Catherine, he suddenly realized that he could not forsake her —that he loved her with an emotion whose strength seemed incomprehensible. He did not adore and long for her as he had felt toward Marian, but she was chained to him with strong links, namely, the links of her unhappy fate, which he had tried to conquer and had found himself vanquished in the fray.

Full of these thoughts, he reached home. As he ascended the house-steps the town-clock struck ten, and he saw a bright light in his room. No sooner had he rung the bell than the baroness opened the door and greeted him with great joy. Her sisterly anxiety had brought her downstairs, to be the first to welcome him, and, with evident uneasiness, she cried:

"What has happened? Why did you stay so long?"

With a coldness foreign to his wont, Bruno returned:

"Can't I even take a little airing without your exhibiting such care? This sort of thing is slavery!"

Eveline drew back involuntarily, and gave her brother a searching look. Interpreting his extreme pallor of countenance unfavorably, she exclaimed:

"What became of the man?"

"I had him arrested!" said Bruno, shortly. This reply relieved her mind greatly, and the young man, desirous of avoiding other questions, asked: "Where is Catherine?"

"Here, of course," replied his sister.

"How is she? Is she quiet?"

"She was very much frightened and wept bitterly. The old idea of having 'no luck in the world' has revived, and for a while mastered her. But now she has grown calm and gone to some employment."

Bruno was, or seemed to be, contented with this answer. But he did not fail to note his sister's want of sympathy for the girl's sufferings, and the realization drew him closer to his *protegée* and further from Eveline. He told himself that love for him was the sole cause of her hardness, but none the less did it repel him.

Eveline asked anxiously whether he had supped—would sup or would go upstairs with her. When he gave a negative reply to all, she tried in vain to induce him to discuss the day's adventure. At length, in heaviness of spirit, she rose to say good-night. Bruno found it impossible to embrace her as usual, and, making excuse of his position, only gave her his hand. She left the room in silence, to spend a night of sleepless cares and tears.

Finding himself indisposed to rest, Bruno walked the floors of his two apartments, while tumultuous thoughts raged through his mind. About midnight, when no sound was audible on the street save the soft rustle of the linden leaves, the young man heard a slight movement before his door. Fearing that some robber had entered the house, he quickly threw open the door and stepped back, startled by the unexpected sight of Catherine.

"You here?" he cried, as he recognized, not without pleasure, the one for whom his heart was heavy. Then he took her kindly by the hand, and was about to lead her into the apartment, but recollected himself and asked: "Why are you not asleep?"

"I?" she replied with a glance that went to his heart, while her tearful eyes and tone of voice fully expressed all the unhappiness for which she grieved. Then he conducted her within the room, and they stood hand in hand.

"Don't weep but take courage!" he said consolingly, "It was just as well that it happened so; for it had to come!"

"Yes, it had to come!" she echoed sadly. "Wherever I come, I bring the shame and ill-luck, which lie upon me as a curse and to-morrow morning—"

She ceased from emotion, stepped a little in front of him and, suddenly falling on the floor and embracing his knees while she leaned her head against him, sobbed.

"May God bless you, may God bless you for what you have done for me! I will go!"

"Catherine!" cried Bruno raising her from the floor. "Catherine, will you go?"

"I must!" she said.

"Away from me?" he replied, while tears welled into his eyes and tender love filled his heart. "Away from me," he repeated opening his arms and pressing her form to his breast. The girl clung to him for one brief instant with passionate tenacity and then breaking from him, threw her hair back from her forehead like one recalling herself to her senses and exclaimed.

"When the baroness sent me out on the gallery to look for your return, I saw Christian. He told me everything—I know everything, and you must leave the regiment in disgrace on account of me!"

"Does my sister know it?" asked Bruno, to whom every word she said was as a sharp sword in the heart: "Does she know?"

Catherine shook her head in negation and said "I will go—even to-night—and, then, all will be well again!"

"Well again?" repeated Bruno, observing with terror the mysterious expression of her countenance.

"Yes!" she cried. "Bad luck came here with me and will go away with me. Some people are born with a curse upon them and it keeps there. Shall I give it to others? The boat cannot carry two—it will sink!"

Bruno stood before her, devoid of power to comfort. He felt the truth of all she said, but his love withstood the trial. He knew not how to meet her superstition at the moment, for her representation made an impression upon his spirits. He seemed to see before him a sea in which he must sink and draw Catherine after him. With manly resolve, he repressed the melancholy thought, and, for the sake of his awakened love for Catherine, he decided to remain master of himself and of the affair.

So he embraced her tenderly, and said:

"Don't give place to such thoughts. Don't speak a word about this to the baroness or any one else, and depend on me. But, above all, give up the foolish idea of forsaking me, for I will not forsake you!"

Catherine looked at him for one instant, as if she did not believe her own senses, and then a ray of extreme delight—rapture—flew over her countenance. Her speechless love and trust threatened to overpower his resolution.

To recover himself, he said with a faint smile:

"Go to bed, now! And remember that a good boat will not be so easily swamped; but, if it is, I will bring you to the shore, for I am a good swimmer! Good night, and may you rest sweetly!"

With the last words, he kissed her more than once, and she hastily withdrew.

CHAPTER XIII.

Next morning Bruno did not go as usual to parade. Instead of that, several strange officers visited the house, besides one of his intimate friends, so that poor Eveline's previous suspicions of evil received full corroboration. But she could not see her brother nor did she dare question others concerning his affairs, while the fear of a duel, of which Catherine was the undoubted cause, grew each moment toward certainty. Hence, she felt angered by the sight of the girl, and she could not make up her mind to address a word to her. That the features of Catherine showed a new and peculiar expression made her proximity but the more unbearable. Toward noon, Bruno made his appearance. At dinner he would not engage in pleasant conversation and, evidently, only ate to quiet his sister's suspicions of wrong.

But her tender love failed not to see his restlessness and disturbance of mind. At dusk, the friendly comrade, who had before come, returned, accompanied by another officer, and were closeted for a few moments with Bruno.

Eveline, who had taken occasion to sit in the ante-room above, with the door open, so as to know whether her brother went out with the visitors, heard them greet him with the farewell, cheerful words:

"In the morning!"

It was not long afterward before he came upstairs to take tea with her. He was very pale, but calm and ate with good appetite. While supping, he asked with interest:

"Eveline, haven't you been out to-day?"

"No," she returned seriously, "I have been too much concerned about you for any pleasure, for, if appearances do not greatly deceive, you have had some trouble about Catherine."

"Some," he said, "but it will soon be over—it is slight."

"Don't think you will come off easily from this opposition," was the warning reply. "There are some affairs which seem insignificant but cannot be ruled, and if we do not yield to them we must be crushed under their weight, and—"

"I know your unfortunate theory about innate bad luck," interrupted he, "and I think it is now as formerly just as depressing as false. From it, Catherine has suffered more than has been good for her or pleasant to me."

"Than has been good for her or pleasant to you?" repeated the sister with apparent displeasure. "Why do you thus reproach me?"

"Man is the architect of his own fortune," he returned evasively, "man is master of his own destiny. This is true and must be believed, unless we acknowledge wickedness and injustice as our necessary rulers. For the honor of humanity and out of regard for my own future, I will maintain this principle as long as there is a spark of life in my body."

Eveline did not at once reply, for she was afraid to express what lay heavily on her heart. At last, she sadly said:

"Our relation to each other is changed. You no longer trust me. One year and a day—"

"Don't forget," he put in, "that there comes a time for every man when he can seek advice from no mortal but rely on his own judgment."

"Then a man must not expect the help and support of others!" was the thoughtless reply.

"You are right to reproach me thus, and I accept it," said he, solemnly. "I should have had the forethought to keep myself out of danger of needing your support. I was wrong, and assure you that I regret it and ask pardon. Be so kind as to believe that it was an error of judgment and know that I have unintentionally disturbed your mind."

So far the brother and sister had studiously avoided names and facts in their conversation. There was a nameless separation between them that saddened both. Whenever those who have been closely bound together for any cause disagree, the gulf is but the wider for their former union. But the situation grew so painful to Bruno that he reached his hand to his sister and said, in a pacific tone:

"Have patience, dear Eveline, and trust me for a few days! And please be kind to Catherine, for she is, at least, guiltless of the trouble that has arisen between us."

A great load was lifted from his heart by this overture to reconciliation, and a responsive word from his sister would have brought him to her arms, but she thrust back the proffered hand and, carried away by resentment to the girl and terror produced by the certainty of Bruno's intentions, exclaimed:

"He who raises a Dulcinea of Toboso on his shield cannot make her a duchess, but degrades himself to a Don Quixote!"

The passion and hardness of her voice grated upon Bruno's ear, and with similar feelings he ejaculated: "Eveline!" repressed the words springing to his lips, and turning to the door, said, in a milder tone:

"Repent of those words if you can!"

In another instant the door had closed behind him.

That hour began the domestic troubles. The baron refused to accept the usual services of Catherine, and directed her to remain in her room.

Full of anxiety and expectation the girl sat through the night. Her surprised distress over banishment from the baroness was only equaled by her hopes of soon hearing from Bruno the explanation of everything. Not daring to seek him, she trustingly awaited his promised aid. The hours of the night passed quickly to one occupied with thoughts of the recent happy past, and of the possible beautiful future.

All life was illuminated by the realization of reciprocated love. She never thought of herself as Bruno's wife—she never took a practical view of the future—but she rejoiced that he had pressed her to his heart, that he had kissed her, and that he had promised not to forsake her.

The first ray of morning sunlight that entered the window seemed a harbinger of coming joy. Fervently she fell on her knees and thanked God for her great, her unmerited happiness. Seldom does a purer, heartier prayer ascend to Heaven from a happier mortal. When the girl went out to find her usual occupations, she saw herself avoided by her former fellow-servants, and quietly returned to her apartment. Seated there with her sewing and her thoughts, she was content to leave her fate in Bruno's keeping.

Hours passed away and much running around and conversation disturbed the house, so that curiosity prompted her again to descend to the kitchen. The cook reported that several visitors had come, but the baroness had declined to see them until the arrival of Frau Kahlbach, who was now with her.

The truth was that Eveline, almost crazy with suspense and alarm, hoped to gain some information from the old gossip about the charges brought against her brother. That morning he had gone to parade as usual, without giving her any satisfaction.

Her heart beat fast as the aged guest approached her and, with conventional, apparent affection, pressed her to her breast. The baroness was glad of the half-minute respite allotted for silent sympathy in the fashionable world to gather self-possession for her questions. The visitor, escaping at the first possible instant from duty, exclaimed:

"Dear Eveline—sweet Eveline, how happy I am that all has turned out well, and that Bruno remains with you and with us!"

"Remains?" cried the baroness, as a cold shiver ran over her body.

"He could not have stayed in Dantzig! He must have left the regiment!" returned Frau Kahlbach, noting with surprise and satisfaction that she was telling news.

Once launched on this theme, she rapidly and zealously related all she knew. She told how her son had witnessed Karl's attack upon Bruno, and the latter's drawing and withdrawing his sword; how he had learned from the colonel, of Bruno's request; but how he had kept out of the committee sent to wait on him, from fear that his intimacy with the family might be interpreted as a reason for his partiality in decision. She said that she had since learned of the decision of the improvised court of military justice in favor of Bruno, and that he had been received on the parade ground that morning with every mark of esteem and honor. She did not know that Eveline had heard nothing of all this nor that Bruno had not returned to the house, the hour for parade being long past; but she presumed that after the happy termination to the affair, the comrades had assembled somewhere to commemorate the day in toasts.

Never had Frau Kahlbach paid so long a visit before, for the evident care and solicitude of her listener intensified the pleasure of narrating and lengthened unnecessarily the facts to be conveyed.

The servant was laying the cloth for dinner in the adjoining room, and Eveline, in an agony of expectation, rose and looked out of the window, before the old woman thought of leaving.

"It is late," she said, as if surprised, "and I fear that my son is at home waiting for me! You know very well, my dear, that we never get too old to be under the tyranny of men, whether they be husbands, sons or brothers! That you ought to understand, as Bruno rules you!"

"Not that I know of!" retorted Eveline, for the first time sufficiently composed to reply to her visitor.

"Oh," laughed the meddlesome woman, lightly touching her hostess's shoulder with her handsome parasol, "since the beautiful Catherine has been taken into the house and made your companion, no sensible person doubts that your brother rules you!"

All the blood of the younger woman's body seemed to rush into her face, as she drew back and proudly said:

"I think, Frau Kahlbach, that the sight of the girl as my companion should forever silence gossip."

"What an idea, child!" cried the visitor, more excitedly. "Who ever doubted that you and Bruno have acted and still act with the best intention? The colonel truly said that you were idealists—

making philanthropy a profession—and that all your mistakes should be ascribed to your impractical ideas, but, none the less, you must change. Only reflect that the reputation of a lady and the honor of an officer are something remote from the ideal. And if this fellow who attacked Bruno is put in the penitentiary, as he ought to be, then you cannot keep his former mistress in your house!"

"Don't trouble yourself on my account," returned Eveline, freezingly. "I will act as I feel inclined and as my brother considers right. It seems to me that we are old enough to manage our own business!"

"Just as you choose," said the visitor, as she gave her hostess a parting pressure of the hand. "I have performed the duty of a friend, and trust that you will not repent of acting differently from other mortals."

Eveline stood motionless after the door closed upon Frau Kahlbach, in a tumult of feeling. The revelations of the gossip had produced a stronger impression than she expected. She felt resentment toward her brother and herself because they had brought things to such a pitch, and almost hatred toward Catherine, who, innocently, had caused the trouble. After what had transpired, she saw no help but to banish the obnoxious creature from the house.

Meantime, the clock struck three, and her brother had not come. As he never kept her waiting, she could not remain still. Each moment her uneasiness increased, and, desperately, she rang for his servant to learn how long he had been out. This person explained that his master had returned from parade with some friends, spent a short while in his room and then gone out again with them. To the question if he had left word that he would dine out, a negative answer was given. Then an indescribable terror mastered her. Unable to remain within the limits of her own rooms, she descended to the lower floor. Everything in Bruno's apartments was in its usual place. She walked their length restlessly, and peered into every corner. In vain did she tell herself that her alarm was groundless. In vain did she try to believe that Bruno's resentment of her rash words kept him from home. How gladly would she have thought that her brother was acting from spite to her, but knowledge of his character denied the possibility!

When the clock struck four, she summoned the servant and ordered him to call Catherine. Scarcely had he disappeared, before the same officer, with whom Bruno had gone out that morning, rang the bell. Eagerly the baroness opened the door and cried:

"Have you seen Bruno!" The man did not reply, and she with sinking heart added: "Where is Bruno?"

The pale, distressed countenance of the officer told more than his language as he replied:

"I bring no good news. Bruno has had a duel and is severely wounded."

"Dead!" gasped poor Eveline, sinking upon a chair near by. The sympathetic friend turned and wept bitterly. Meantime, a carriage stopped before the door, and the officer tenderly led the distracted sister away.

The corpse was carefully removed from the vehicle by the physician of the regiment, an officer and the servant and laid upon the bed. As it was being borne through the halls, Catherine came down the steps. Instantaneously realizing what had happened, she uttered a cry of woe, pressed close to the bed, embraced the dead around the neck and fell sobbing on the floor.

Her loud shriek aroused the attention of Eveline. She arose pale, and tearless, and approached the bedside.

Seeing Catherine near her brother, her lips moved with emotion but she said firmly and coldly:

"Disgrace him not by your presence, for you have sent him to death!"

Catherine responded by a cry of despair. All the long—nourished and concealed passion of her nature burst forth with a violence which alarmed the bystanders. She wrung her hands and tore her hair, and in every way showed that she was beside herself with grief.

"Carry her away!" commanded the baroness, shuddering and turning away from her.

She could not bear to see the girl near the corpse of her brother. Thereby, did his separation from herself appear the greater.

When the unfortunate creature was removed, Eveline drew close to the body of Bruno and fully realized what she had forever lost. Heart-broken yet tearless, she looked upon the mortal remains of her only brother, to whom years of peace and harmony had bound her but who had but yesterday left her in resentment—forever. It was hard to know that cruel death divided them. She would have given her life for one forgiving loving word from his lips, but, alas, it was too late!

And it was Catherine who had driven him to his death!

CHAPTER XIV.

That evening it was generally known that Bruno had fallen in a duel with Captain Kahlbach, and the causes were equally discussed with the event.

It was declared that the captain, after the decision of the military court of justice in favor of Bruno, tried to bring about an adjustment of his troubles with Bruno, but that the lieutenant had made it understood that he loved Catherine, and would not be satified with anything less than a duel after the occurrence in the market-place. Being sustained in his position by his second, he had, with equal calmness, driven to the place of combat and received the death-wound of his opponent.

In all public-houses, the details of the affair were fully given, and thereby the name of the maid of Hela was freely bandied from mouth to month. But when news of the girl's passionate grief over Bruno's corpse was brought, no doubt remained in the public mind of her relation to the deceased. It was regretted that so worthy a representative of a noble family should have been the victim of such foolish ideas and unusual conduct, and much curiosity was expressed as to what the baroness would do with the cause of her bereavement.

Frau Kahlbach did her utmost to nourish popular displeasure against Catherine, because her son had been taken by the authorities and imprisonment was inevitable. This was natural and in accordance with her great love for her child. She never grew weary of repeating to her visitors that she had often warned Eveline of future trouble about Catherine, and that her son had been willing, from regard to the family, to avoid the duel with Bruno, in spite of the gross insult offered to him in public. She complained that neither one could be turned from his folly. She thought it dreadful for an intelligent woman of forty to sustain her brother in an attachment for her servant. Bruno was only to be pitied, and no one mourned his death more than his slayer, but the baroness was greatly to blame. She had only aided the blind passion of Bruno from a desire to appear superior to other women in mind and character, and her wicked pride had brought fearful punishment in his death.

There were a few of Eveline's friends who comprehended and honored her course of action. But there was no one who reproached her more bitterly than her own conscience in the first hours of desolation and despair. Sometimes she feared she had done too much, sometimes too little, for her sisterly duty toward her lost one. When mortals confront the irrevocable, they are prone to exercise self-blame and remorse.

But if Eveline felt herself culpable, she deemed Catherine by far more guilty. In the midst of her deep grief over Bruno's death, there arose a fierce animosity toward this unhappy girl. Through connection with her his name was publicly disgraced and her own sullied. Reproach herself as she would for the injustice, she could not repress this burning hatred against the girl. It was not the least of her charges that Bruno's final request was for the protection of the friendless source of all her troubles.

The last sentence of a farewell letter found on his table was this :

"Be kind to poor Catherine and forsake her not. It was not her fault that I loved her."

During the first day of mourning she could not make up her mind either to see or speak to the girl, nor on the day of the burial were her feelings mollified. She gave orders that she should remain in her room and communicate with no one besides Frau Beier, for she wished to avoid the possibility of another terrible outburst of passion such as the strange officers had witnessed from the undisciplined creature.

It was a sunny August morning when the hearse drew up before the door to bear to his last resting-place all that was mortal of Bruno von Horst. From her bedroom window Catherine could see the pall-bearers with the coffin and the black-robed domestics leave the house. She saw the funeral train start toward the church. As a prisoner she stood by the window and looked on, while no one seemed to acknowledge her existence or interest in the transaction. When the sound of the retreating wheels ceased all life within and without seemed to expire. A palsy, nameless, and formless possessed her being.

All through the previous day and two nights she had shed hot, despairing tears. All through that time she had prayed God to take her from the earth, where misfortune had followed her from her birth. In some moments she had even meditated ending by her own hand a life so full of sorrows ; but fear of separating herself for eternity from Bruno by the wicked deed always crushed the design.

But now utter exhaustion of physical powers annihilated capacity for intelligent action. Blank in mind, crushed in heart, she stood there. The future presented no hope—no anchor to her. She could no longer weep—she could no longer think. Suddenly, the loud bell of the neighboring church sounded forth. Its first reverberation moved her deeply. Once—twice—thrice—many times—did it strike. Each blow was a wound to the broken heart, a weight to the weary brain. She knew what its tones proclaimed. She felt that he was borne away to the grave!

A few hours later the house-maid brought her some food. Hunger she had none, nor did she need nourishment. A sympathetic word she did need, but there was none uttered. The girl had neither conception of nor power to minister to her heart-troubles.

Late in the evening the baroness sent for her, and could not conceal her shock at sight of the alteration which two days had effected. She wanted to speak to her kindly and show her the interest which her brother's last request called for, but the evident traces of the girl's despair made the accomplishment of the duty impossible.

Instead of this suffering evoking the sympathy, it brought out the resentment of the baroness. She blamed her because Bruno had loved her, and shuddered because her brother's name must be forever linked with this creature in the memory of men. When she knew that the reputation of the dead was thus dishonored, instead of the requested sympathy, she found it impossible to feel anything but repugnance toward the offender and anxiety to remove her at once from her side.

In times of great trial, men will act with fearful selfishness. They try to believe that they are acting for good, and generally lighten their own hearts at the expense of breaking those of others. And thus did the baroness. Her first words were:

"I have sent for you to let you know that my deceased brother wrote me a farewell letter, in which he asked me to continue my protection to you. His request I intend to carry out, but don't expect that I can—as in the past—" She ceased, frowned and resumed more firmly than before: "That you can stay with me longer is impossible. I think—after the calamity which you have here wrought, after the publicity which you have thereby gained—that it will be better for you to seek some other home as quickly as possible."

Catherine stood as if cut out of stone, except that her eyes spoke volumes. The torture of fright, grief and despair so plainly expressed in them moved Eveline to shame and remorse.

"Don't misunderstand me!" she cried quickly. "I will not dismiss you—I will not forsake you! In spite of all the misery and harm you have brought upon me, I will care for you, and do not now say where you shall go. Decide that for yourself. If you want to return home—if you desire to go back to Frau Deik—"

"To Frau Deik!" repeated the girl, in astonishment. "Why, Karl is in jail!"

The baroness had not thought of this objection, and she was displeased to be reminded of it by Catherine. So she replied, with a certain haste and warmth:

"Well, if you want to go back to your native village or anywhere else, I will assist you to it. Only decide at once. What 's the matter? Are you hungry? You look ill!"

Catherine slowly shook her head, and returned:

"I am not hungry—I want nothing."

"Then go out on the gallery and sit awhile in the fresh air. Think about what you want. No one can decide for you. You cannot stay here longer," the baroness repeated firmly.

The girl silently obeyed the command. Then Eveline felt reproached for her hardness toward the orphan, but could not bring herself to acknowledge it. Gladly would she have wept and sorrowed with some one.

She keenly felt the absence of this small amelioration of sorrow to her own heart, and yet she was rigid not to mitigate the woe of her fellow-sufferer by sympathy.

The habit of strict obedience, which years had made second nature, carried Catherine, meanwhile, to the gallery.

In perfect indifference—almost like a sleep-walker—she sat down in the usual seat by the wall. Her eyes rested upon the steps down which she had so recently seen him borne, and upon which he had so often gone out and in the house. Once she slightly turned her head so that the closed blinds of his window met her view. There she sat in the growing twilight, without normal will or thoughts.

Presently the wind sprang up and rustled the leaves of the neighboring trees. Involuntarily she glanced at the nearest linden, and as the beauty of the shade-tree struck her, great tears welled into her eyes. The thought of such a tree standing by his grave brought her to realize that he was, indeed, lying in the cold ground, and made her weep as if her poor heart would break.

No sooner was the idea of his burial presented than she determined to seek—to find his grave, and the desire produced a revival of powers. She rose, intending to enter the house, and ask where he was laid, when Christian presented himself before her.

Formerly, she had sought to avoid him, but now she was glad he came.

As she paused on the threshold, he ascended the steps and approached her.

"Good evening!" he said. "I was afraid that you had gone away!"

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I have been here watching for you several days, and you did not come. My master is taken. He gave himself up as soon as he got home. Karl will come off ill. He was never much."

Catherine listened to him, but did not answer. After a little he asked, anxiously:

"What will become of you?"

"Of me?" repeated she, looking at him with as much surprise as if he had asked a strange question.

"Has nothing happened to you?" he continued.

"Have I done any wrong?" was the simple query.

"You are the town talk," he replied earnestly. "Much is said about you, and nothing good."

Scornfully she shrugged her shoulders, and afterward said:

"Let them talk!"

"If I were you," exclaimed he passionately, "I would not stay here any longer. I would go as far away as my feet would carry me. You cannot stay here. A home you will not find—a friend you cannot find here any more than in the village or with Frau Deik, because Karl is in jail on your account. If I were you I would go away in the first good ship."

"I am not going away!" answered she, firmly.

The words, so far from rebuffing him, made him continue more eagerly:

"You have never been to America, and don't know how far it is. There no little birds tell what has been said and done here. Soon I will be free from service and will follow you. If you do go, and if you will— I come after, for if every one else is against you, I believe in you." This he said with more passion: "I have always believed in you and will stand by you; as God knows, I will do it!"

She had sunk back upon the stone seat with her hands folded in her lap, while he patiently awaited her answer.

"Speak!" he entreated.

Instead of replying she gave him her hand.

"And you will?" cried he, joyfully, while his noble, true heart beat fast and his eyes sought to read her face.

But she shook her head sadly as she said:

"I have before told you how it is with me, and it is the same now that he is dead! Had he lived, he told me that he would not have forsaken me, and, therefore, I cannot forsake him in death. I have driven him to death and my place is by his grave. No farther than there will I ever go! Good night!"

She wished to go but he held her back. Her mourning for Bruno burned his heart more than her hard-heartedness to himself. Disappointment and jealousy choked his throat with emotion. Hastily loosening the cloth around his neck with his free hand he said in a voice almost threatening:

"Catherine, the dead come not again—they are gone forever. I have all my life been steadfast to you—why do you not take me?"

"I cannot, as truly as God lives I cannot! So leave me now! Do you also want to be killed?" was the despairing answer.

While she spoke, she had put her hand on the knob of the door, but again he held her back with the words:

"Catherine what do you intend?"

"Nothing, nothing!" she answered, but the hand which he held firmly clasped in his own became cold and tremulous.

For an instant they stood thus dumb.

Then Christian said solemnly:

"I know what you intend, but if I cannot have you no one else shall either here or there. There shall be an end and sooner than you think. Depend on that and good night!"

And flinging her hand off, he moved away with rapid steps.

CHAPTER XV.

Next day was very cloudy and sultry. The whole morning Eveline spent in looking over her brother's papers. Toward dusk, a lady-friend came to persuade her to take a little walk on the pavement, and she accompanied her.

A half-hour after the two had gone out, Catherine appeared at the door, robed in a black dress and straw hat trimmed in mourning. Frau Beier, who was sitting on the gallery, asked where she was going. When she replied that she wished to visit the grave of the baron, the old woman thought the desire natural and directed her how to find it. She was kind-hearted by nature and, considering herself a sort of guardian to Catherine in view of having brought her to the baroness from the post-station, she added a warning to her not to stay long.

Catherine gladly gave the promise to obey, and rapidly made her way to the desired place. The streets were alive with men and vehicles, but she pressed on without seeming to see or hear anything around her.

When she reached the churchyard gate, the fresh air and solitude gave a sort of solace to her heart. Peace and quiet prevailed. The trees seemed greener and the atmosphere more invigorating than elsewhere. A path led to the family section where Bruno was buried. Right and left of it lay the green hillocks beneath which so many, once alive and busy, were sleeping their last sleep. Most of them were marked with headstones and covered with flowers. But she spared no time to examine these, while there was one new-made grave toward which her steps were bent. At last, in the upper end of the cemetery where the ground was higher, she found it.

An iron railing ornamented with gilt points surrounded four hillocks, three of which were covered with refreshing green and marked by handsome monuments, and they covered the mortal remains of the parents, brother-in-law and betrothed of Bruno. But his, the fourth grave, was still fresh, and the turf intended to ornament it lay in large pieces by the gate of the inclosure.

The grave-digger observed the girl stand for a minute by the railing and then enter the section of the Von Horsts, but as he judged by her mourning that she was either relative or servant of the family, he did not think her action strange. It was true that he felt a little surprise when she fell on her knees by the new-made grave, and with loud sobs embraced the mound ; but an experience of thirty years in a cemetery had taught him the good lesson that weeping is the best and only vent for sorrow

He turned off to pursue his occupation, and as he did so he saw a young soldier passing by, whom he took for the lieutenant's servant, as he wore the uniform of his regiment. Because it was nearly time to close the gate, he called to the young man that it was late, and he would kindly inform the girl of the fact. . Having the polite reply that the request should be granted, the old man repaired to another part of the grounds and forgot the incident.

But scarcely had he commenced his job before he heard one and then another shot come from the direction he had left. As quickly as his years would permit he retraced his steps, and the sight which met his eyes was indeed heartrending. Within the narrow inclosure lay the maid and soldier weltering in each other's blood.

The girl was stretched out upon the grave, quite dead. The shot had unerringly pierced her heart and left her face unchanged. The soldier, still living, had dragged himself to her feet. When the horrified spectator tried to evoke explanation of the deed, he gasped: "I could—not—help—it!" and almost immediately expired.

When a little later Catherine's absence was remarked and inquired into by the household of Baroness Rettfeld and the news was brought of where and how she was found, Eveline was prostrated and the servants stunned by the horrible tragedy. Not one of them dared speak of a death for which they felt a partial responsibility.

The chief of police was at once summoned and spent an hour with the baroness. Next morning, the affair was published but in a most guarded manner. A soldier—it was said—had killed his betrothed, and afterward himself from mad jealousy.

Eveline ordered that Catherine should immediately be buried among the common people, but her grave should be marked by a handsome cross. Next morning she left Dantzig, both to escape the meddlesome sympathy that would inevitably afflict her and to obtain the seclusion which her sorrows demanded.

Christian was not buried by Catherine's side. In a remote part of the cemetery—among those who had committed suicide—he found his last resting-place. Only once—one single time—was his name coupled with that of the girl to whom his love had through life been faithful.

The pastor of Hela received a letter, requesting him to convey to those interested the sad news that Christian had shot both himself and Catherine. The good man took occasion to follow the intelligence by a sermon next Sunday, in which he plainly showed to his flock what part they had taken in bringing about the tragedy. And while Christian's parents and Frau Deik were shedding bitter tears of distress and remorse, he fervently prayed that God might have forgiven the sins of both—the murdered and the murderer—and that their sad end might be a valuable lesson to the people from whose influences they had met so untimely a fate.

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